

An Ethnographic Exploration of the Day to Day Texture of the School Life of Poor Children

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ABSTRACT

This study is an ethnographic exploration into the daily school life of learners at a former ‘Model C’ primary school. The primary school, named *Good Hope School* for the purposes of this study, was chosen because of its demographics as well as its geographic and social positioning in the Durban city area. It was attended by poor South African learners from the townships around Durban as well as refugee and migrant learners from various African countries who lived in the run-down neighbouring flats.

Through a theoretical grounding in space and time the study explores how learners experienced their education and why they experienced it the way they did. The Grade Six learners of this school were central to the study and it is their complex life realities and interaction with their learning that was closely observed and analysed. The learning emerged as a complex combination of limited choices in a learning environment that was constrained by being under-resourced, as well as the socio-economic problems of the surrounding neighbourhood.

This thesis highlights the social tensions that existed in the urban living spaces of the learners and impacted on their lives at school. Poverty and urban social realities conflicted with learners’ identity constructs developed at school. It is in the urban spaces of their lives that inequality was experienced, reproduced and constantly reconfigured into learners’ identities. Multiple aspects related to disadvantage resulted in limited access to essential repertoires needed for school success. *Good Hope School’s* mission to teach learners within a regulative and ethical space was undermined by the complex realities of the learners’ poverty.

Critical ethnography is the methodological approach used in this study, allied with actor network theory used as a toolkit to unravel the complex relationships that emerged between the time frames and spatial positioning of the learners in the multiplied contexts of their lives. The study involved a daily observation and interview period over four consecutive months at the school. It also delved into the school’s colonial and apartheid era history. Photographic evidence, obtained through the use of a discreet SenseCam camera, was part of the large data collection aspect of the thesis which included historic official school logs, observations, interviews and historical testimony about the school and the surrounding area.

Through a multiperspectival approach the study is able to pragmatically utilise the theoretical lenses of critical theorists. Whilst Lefebvre and Foucault provide the critical theoretical grounding for the study on the alienation and normalisation, Boltanski's pragmatic approach serves as a guide to ensure that the views of the participants remain paramount in the analysis of the data.

Pathologised identity constructs impact on learning and development in complex ways. The study suggests that the identity constructs of learners are laminated such that the outwardly seen veneer is but a representation of what broader society accepts as normal and desirable. The thesis posits the view that learning is compromised and suppressed in various ways, as the learners' social lives, positioning and status impacted on their learning in a multifaceted web of overlapping settings.

The school, with its majestic history and experience of more than a hundred years, has transformed in ways not many have understood or acknowledged. Through its efforts the school has provided hope to the poor community it serves. This thesis posits that the social context of learners' lives impact on their learning. Although the children expressed hope for an affluent future, the evidence in this study shows that it is more than likely that the children from poor communities are trapped in a trajectory of socio-economic disadvantage, impacting on their future education and job opportunities.

DEDICATION

This thesis is in memory of my late maternal grandmother, Maude Pentolfe, and my late mother-in-law, Nagamma Chetty, who struggled through life not having had the benefit of classroom education.

I acknowledge my late parents, Lillian and John William Perez, who encouraged their children to read, debate and persevere.

DECLARATION

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy, in the Graduate Programme in the
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.**

I, Carmel TM Chetty (Student No. 202520212), declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
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Date: _____

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Good Hope School

Good Hope School has a history spanning more than a hundred years -- from the height of British colonialism, through the period of Afrikaner hegemony and into the present, where democracy in South Africa is now almost two decades old. This school was the subject of an ethnographic study which I conducted in 2011 to explore what was happening behind the imposing, red face-brick walls of the school.



Figure 1: Entrance to the school; outside wall of the hall

Good Hope School is situated in one of the most picturesque parts of the Durban coastline, close to a popular beachfront tourist attraction. Towering above the school buildings are the nearby luxury high rise apartments, reflecting the changed social space of the moneyed elite who have moved into what was formerly a neglected, run-down area.

The Mayor, Cllr. James Nxumalo, in a foreword to a publication issued by the eThekweni Municipality, described the city as “a world class city that is praised by its citizens and visitors alike” (Magwaza, p. 9). In his conclusion Nxumalo states:

The threads that are woven into this city are integral to the rich history of South Africa, and contribute to the cultural diversity and harmony that defines life in eThekweni. Welcome to Durban, the warmest place to be! I hope you enjoy Durban – a return to paradise and its people (Magwaza).

Indeed the attached picture (figure 2) attests to the undeniable beauty of the city.



Figure 2: Durban beachfront with the harbour in the background¹

The mayor is correct in his reference to the rich history and cultural diversity of the area. However, his glowing analysis, which is primarily directed at tourists and foreign business delegations, masks the lived reality described by the *Good Hope School* learners living in the area who were interviewed for this study. The luxury hotels and apartments bordering the recently upgraded promenade mask growing urban decay just metres away in the back streets. It is this seedy section of the city that the young children of *Good Hope School* have to traverse and negotiate daily.

1.1.1 First Impressions

At my first meeting at the school, I was warmly welcomed by the principal, Mrs Thompson, and the vice-principals, Mrs Elliot and Mr Mathe. On introducing the topic of my investigation, the three head teachers assured me that I had come to the right place as the school was a haven for the most impoverished learners in the area. They stated that available statistics at the school

¹ Sourced from: <http://www.southafrica.net/uploads/legacy/1/13812/01302243.jpg>

indicated that the area bordering the school to the north was very densely populated, as well as crime-ridden. The principal was of the view that the area had surpassed even Hillbrow, in Johannesburg, as the most densely populated area in South Africa.

I took an immediately liking to all three members of the senior management of the school. They struck me as sincere human beings who were working under very difficult conditions and trying to make a difference in the lives of the children in their care. At that first meeting I was given a clear understanding of the way the principal and her senior team viewed the children and their role in the school. They were humanitarians who not only saw to the educational needs of their learners but considered their human needs as well. To illustrate their humanitarian intervention Mrs Elliott (one of the vice principals) showed me a mountain of blankets stacked almost to the roof in her office ready to be distributed to the needy learners at the school.

Fataar (2007a), in his study titled *Educational Renovation in a South African 'Township on the Move': A Social-Spatial Analysis*, found that teachers are forced to play such humanitarian roles due to the extreme poverty and deprivation they find amongst the learners. His study was conducted at a township school in the Western Cape. He states: "All the teachers who were interviewed concurred that their daily confrontation with the impact of hunger and deprivation force them to prioritise the welfare of the children" (2007a, p. 607).

Mrs Thompson, the principal, was knowledgeable about the learners at the school. The school had an open admissions policy that meant it accepted everyone and anyone. While the majority of learners came from the area surrounding the school, many travelled long distances from townships as far afield as Kwa Mashu and Umlazi. She reported that the school had a 40% intake of migrant learners from across Africa. They included children from Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi and Nigeria. A view expressed by the principal was that the children from Rwanda and Burundi were more hardworking children than those from the Congo (DRC), while the South African children were perceived as the least hardworking at the school. However, in the classroom I was in, the majority of migrant children were Congolese and I found it difficult to differentiate between them and other children in the class.

The principal reported that the school was inundated with social problems that emanated from the surrounding areas teeming with criminals, drug lords and sex workers. She prefaced her warnings about the difficulties at the school with the comment, “Anything you may have heard about the school is true”. By this she implied that the school’s reputation was poor compared to that of other former ‘Model C’² schools which had been ‘whites only’ schools during the apartheid era.

I respected Mrs Thompson who, as part of the school staff in the nineties, was a trail blazer who took a stand against the dominant view prevalent in former ‘Model C’ schools, to maintain the status quo as a way of ensuring that standards did not drop. While the school had retained some of its ethos and character from the past, it had bravely ventured into the new uncharted territory of an open admissions policy. Taking this leap of faith during the changes in the country meant that the school forfeited the financial support it may have otherwise received from affluent parents. Over the past 19 years the school has morphed into an institution that is quite different from its origins. The staff component is more representative of South Africa’s racial demographics. The few ‘white’³ children in the school are generally assumed to be those from the poorer classes who cannot afford the high-end former ‘Model C’ schools. The 40% migrant component of the learner population gives the school a uniquely African authenticity not easily replicated in other schools across the province.

Since I conducted my research in the Grade Six classroom within the senior section of the school, most of my interaction had to be with Mr Mathe, the vice principal of the senior section of the school who, though a man of few words, made my stay immensely fulfilling as he never interfered or placed any obstacles in the path of my research programme. Indeed, the entire management team cooperated fully with all my requests and provided whatever assistance they could.

² Schools that were previously under the control of the former white education department: House of Assembly

³ Inverted commas are used to indicate that race is socially constructed

During my initial visit to the school, I was invited to return to the school the following week to start my research. The management team indicated that they would choose the Grade Six class that would best suit my needs. I made a mental note that they would probably choose the class that would least embarrass the school. Although, anecdotal evidence gathered about the behaviour of learners in the other classes tended to corroborate my suspicion, the choice of class was not crucial to the study.

1.1.2 School Assembly

As I walked into the huge, high-ceilinged hall on my first official day at the school I was struck by the many similarities between this school and the school I had taught at just over a year before. The children were quietly seated in rows facing the stage and sang Christian hymns accompanied by the pianist and guitarist. Teachers sat on the sides of the hall on chairs. Those responsible for discipline walked around admonishing learners who were misbehaving.



Figure 3: Grade 6 and 7 Assembly in the School Hall

Unlike at my old school, the principal entered with no fanfare. She and I entered the hall together through a side door from the staff room. While I had been invited to the early morning staff meeting to introduce myself and tell the staff about my research and had been warmly received there, I was made to feel even more welcome at the assembly as the principal instructed the learners to be respectful and helpful to me. The children gave me a rousing welcome. This was not unusual, as I observed on later occasions, as the school had a tradition of welcoming visitors enthusiastically.

Adorning the high walls of the hall were huge wooden plaques with gold lettering acknowledging the achievements of the school's former pupils and the contributions of supporters. Noticeable, also, was that some of the lists had been discontinued as in the case of some sporting activities which, I later discovered, were no longer part of the school's programme.



Figure 4: Historical plaques in the School Hall

A teacher who had gone on holiday to the USA gave a presentation about her holiday. The presentation went on a bit longer than the learners' attention span could handle and they became a little listless, showing interest only when she showed them pictures of fancy cars or popular American symbols that they could identify with. The more important historical and cultural details and landmarks of another continent appeared unimportant to them. The learners' responses and attitude to the photographic presentation was my first insight into either their apparent disregard for information outside of their immediate areas of interest, or the easy boredom of modern, urban children resulting from a possible saturation exposure to television and movies.

1.1.3 Rhythms of School Life

The school had a huge component of about thirty-five teachers who managed over one thousand four hundred learners; divided into a junior and senior section. Each morning, the teachers met at a daily staff meeting before the commencement of the school day. Coincidentally, as if to highlight the financial difficulties of the school, a priority item on the agenda on my first day there was an attempted internet fraud on the school's bank account.

In the introduction to the book *Changing Class, Educational and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Linda Chisholm asks a few important questions:

But what has changed in practice? How are these changes to be interpreted? And why have they changed the way they have? What is the relationship of that change in particular areas of education to broader processes of economic and social change? If apartheid was immanent in everything about the way education was shaped, practised and deployed, then how does the new society embed contemporary forms of education both as an outcome of, and factor in, the transition from apartheid? And how does the new education, in turn, influence social development? (2004b)

These are questions that continue to be relevant and are issues on which this study will also dwell. Chisholm's book recorded the state of affairs ten years after democracy whilst this study was conducted a further seven years later. This study will use theories of space and time to unravel the complexities of the educational experiences of the children of *Good Hope School*. The intention is to study the movement of the social environment through lenses that unfold and reawaken the mundane everyday into a more profound understanding.

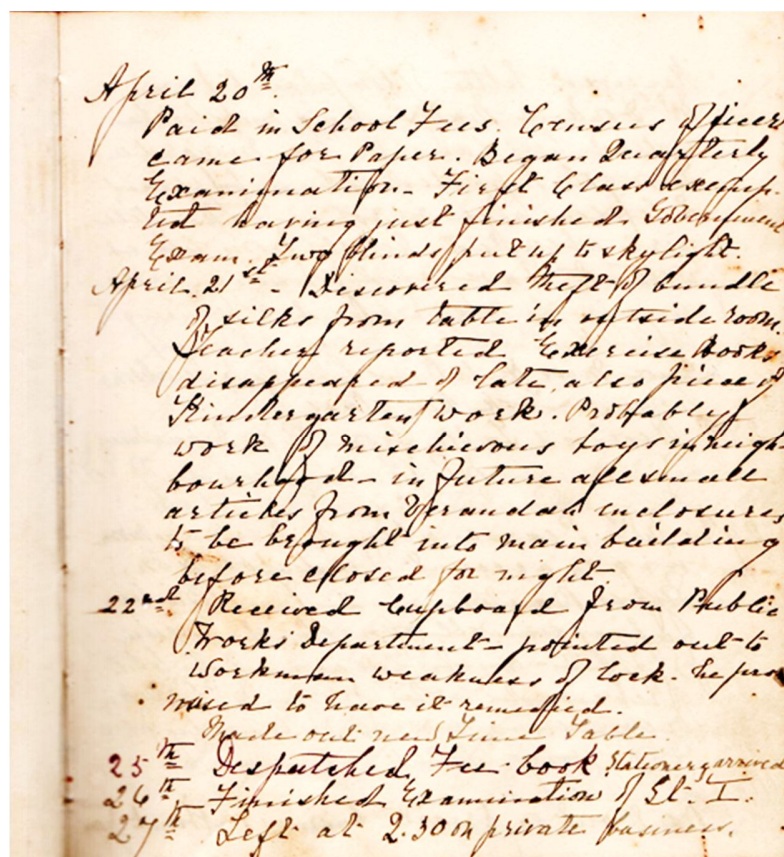
The fact that *Good Hope School* has its roots firmly in the 'white' colonial and apartheid milieu remains relevant for the way in which the school conducts education. The geographic positioning of the school and its proximity to the Durban harbour, and its surrounds, directly impacts on the choices it has made and continues to make.

The school's early history is an integral part of the British colonial traditions. The analysis therefore reflects both change and continuity in the way the school conducts its mandate for education, in accordance with the political dispensation in power. I noticed a rather strange mixture of both assimilatory practices and the recognition of the rich diversity of the present school community. The assimilatory practices were related to the continuation of the rhythms of the past in the way in which the school was organised and controlled. It was also about recognising the past as authentic and integrating the norms and values of the past into the present day ethos of the school. It was related to the adoption of westernised norms by teachers and learners alike. The rich African diversity of the school was celebrated in special assemblies and cultural events but was as yet not integrated wholly into the classroom space.

The celebration of diversity not only embraces a unity of various peoples in a united South African nation, it also helps learners, teachers and communities to understand non-racialism,

non-tribalism and nation building. Through events such as school concerts learners developed a new pride in their national traditions and customs. This recognition developed the notion of acceptance and inclusion. However, much of what passed as African had a strong American bias as learners modelled themselves and their preferences on the rich and famous from America. Hip hop culture dominated the cultural spaces of the school.

While music and song captured the interests of the learners in the school's present, the continuity was situated in the traditions established in the rhythms of school life. From the first page recorded in the school's log book in 1904 (Figure 5) the rhythms of the school were already established. There were no profound comments that illustrated the greatness of the historical moment but rather a recording of the mundane details of school life: collection of school fees, examinations, school security (theft - assumed to be the work of mischievous boys) and the delivery of a cupboard from the public works department.



April 20th
 Paid in School Fees. Census Officer
 came for Paper. Began dictating
 Examination. First Class excepted.
 Not having just finished. Edith's
 Exam. Two blind put up to skylight.
 April 21st - Discovered theft of bundle
 of books from table in outside room.
 Teacher reported. Catherine's books
 disappeared. I late, also pieces of
 Kinder Garten work. Probably
 work of mischievous boys in high
 school. In future all small
 articles from cupboard and enclosures
 to be brought into main building
 before closed for night.
 22nd Received Cupboard from Public
 Works Department - pointed out to
 Workman weaknesses of lock. He
 tried to have it remedied.
 Made out new time table.
 23rd Despatched Fee book Stationer arrived.
 24th Finished Examination of St. I.
 25th Left at 2.30 on private business.

Figure 5: Page from School Logs 1904

Some established rhythms remained the rhythms of the present. The first thing the teacher did as I entered the classroom for the first time was to ask the learners for school fees. At *Good Hope School*, I learnt that few children paid school fees and the school had had to do other forms of fund raising. The maxim of 'the user must pay' did not work at *Good Hope School* and meant great difficulties for the management in the daily running of the school.

The rhythms were also the time-honoured ways in which the assemblies were conducted. The school's strong Christian ethos was reflected in the assembly. More than at any other time in the child's daily school experience the assembly set the tone for discipline and control. The format of 'the teacher talks and the learners listen' was the most common style used during assembly with some allowance for question and answer at the end. Deviations from this format (when visitors conducted the assembly or when classes did their own presentations) often resulted in poor disciplinary control and the occasional intervention from the principal herself.

The Christian hymns and values were established in centuries old traditions and adapted to the present through the use of a guitar and folk style music. While such innovations were radical in the seventies, they were considered old style by the present intake of learners. The values encouraged in this space contrasted sharply with the provocative language and earthy (if not vulgar) rhythms of the rap artists so popular with present day learners. The two value systems occupied spaces alongside one another and had no point of connection (except perhaps in music) that could lead to some kind of conversion or translation.

In the classrooms, rhythms established through the discipline and control of the teacher remained the reality. Children were seated in rows with desks that were reminiscent of my own school days in the 1960s. Silence was of paramount importance and much of the disciplinary issues were related to the breaking of the 'silence rule'. There were at times some efforts made to give learners a voice but more often than not the voice was stifled and redirected to fit in with the established norms and values situated in centuries of tradition and established governance procedures.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

1.2.1 A Personal Reflection

I first contemplated this study when I was invited to participate in a research project that was investigating mathematics education in schools around Pietermaritzburg. I expected to find problems because all research into mathematics education indicated that the state of mathematics education was dire and there was a need for drastic intervention at all levels. Indeed, my perusal of the learners' books and indications from charts and projects displayed around the room indicated that the level of mathematics being taught at that school was far below what should have been taught for Grade Six. At that time I was a Grade Six educator myself and had many years' experience teaching mathematics up to Grade Nine level. A perusal of learners' books indicated that they were being taught far less than the Grade Sixes in my class at an upmarket former 'Model C' school and that very often what they were taught was incorrect. The learners often copied work from the board, as was evident by the fact that exactly the same work could be found in several books, and the work on the board, probably written by the teacher, was incorrect.

My visit to this school on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg made me realise that the problem was not just about mathematics education but went to the heart of how poor learners experience education in many complex ways. It is about the poverty in their homes that means that more often than not they come to school hungry; it is about the legacy of apartheid that produced thousands of mis-educated and under-educated teachers who continue to be the backbone of thousands of schools around South Africa; it is about inadequate resources, textbooks and equipment; it is about trust and the expectation that education can and will deliver individuals from the brutal clutches of poverty.

A visit to Cuba in 2009 was an eye opener to me. The literacy rate in Cuba is one of the highest in the world. Because of complex political dynamics Cuba has been isolated economically and was driven to bankruptcy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, through all the difficulties, the country never reneged on the provision of free education and health. The people in Cuba are

poor by western standards but they do not go hungry and they are not denied an equitable education and health care irrespective of class positioning.

A visit to a poor school in Mozambique in January 2011 convinced me even more of the importance of this study. It is taken for granted, it seems, that if you are poor you cannot expect anything more than gutter education. That school operated a triple platoon system that catered for both primary and high school students. The first session started at about 06:30 in the morning and the third session finished at about 21:30.

The school had been named after the 1981 military raid into Matola by South African Defence Force troops who killed African Nationalist Congress operatives there. Sadly, the fact that it had been christened with an immensely patriotic name did not guarantee the school and the community a better quality of education. The poverty in the school was stark. Classrooms were overcrowded and the school generally filthy. This was not surprising since the few toilets served about 4 000 learners over the course of a day. The school had one principal serving all three school sessions from the morning to the night. Many children hung around outside the classrooms and in the road waiting for the next school session to start.

Cuba's socialist economy and philosophy ensures that the state prioritises the social welfare of its citizens. Other countries, like South Africa and Mozambique, which have accepted the neo-liberal policies demanded by the World Bank and IMF, have privatised schooling so that what is regarded as good education is inaccessible to poorer learners.

1.2.2 A Political Reflection

Nineteen years after the first non-racial democratic elections in South Africa, much of what was previously abhorred and condemned by leading anti-apartheid activists appears to be the reality for many of the poor and working class people who rely on the state to provide an equitable and egalitarian education system. Bloch (2009) expressed popular sentiment in his summary of the dismal state of education for the poor:

Most children find that the education system fails them, penalises them and almost rationalises their on-going exclusion from the fruits of democracy and change. Education seems to reinforce inequality and shuts children out rather than being inclusive in its aspirations and effect.

Put harshly and in pointed form, education tends to reinforce the social and economic marginalization of the poor and vulnerable in South Africa, and it reinforces their position at the survival end of the second economy with few prospects for movement or further development.

The idea of two economies was first mooted by Mbeki (2003) when he was president of South Africa. He explained:

At its Lekgotla in July, the Cabinet once more focused on the critically important issue of the struggle against poverty. In this context, it observed that our country is characterised by two parallel economies, the First and the Second. The First Economy is modern, produces the bulk of our country's wealth, and is integrated within the global economy.

The Second Economy (or the Marginalised Economy) is characterised by underdevelopment, contributes little to the GDP, contains a big percentage of our population, incorporates the poorest of our rural and urban poor, is structurally disconnected from both the First and the global economy, and is incapable of self-generated growth and development.....

and concluded:

Our macro-economic policies and micro-economic interventions have helped to place our public finances and the First Economy on a radically better footing than they were in 1994. These improvements have helped to generate the resources we need to address the challenge of the Second Economy. This also means that we must persist in our work to ensure the further growth and development and modernisation of the First Economy, including its capacity to absorb larger numbers of work-seekers.

It could be argued that the notion of two economies serves to hide and obfuscate the culpability of the capitalist state. Skinner and Valodia (2007), drawing on the writings of Harold Wolpe and Rosa Luxembourgh, conclude that the conceptualisation by Thabo Mbeki of a First and Second Economy serves to “allow government to argue that its economic policies have been successful for the First Economy and, as a result of these successes, government is now able to address issues of poverty and unemployment in the Second Economy” (p. 116).

The two economy thesis is reflected in the education system. Fleisch (2008) built on Thabo Mbeki's⁴ two nation thesis and the idea of two parallel economies, alluded to above, and suggested that by implication it can be assumed that “South Africa has not one, but two education ‘systems’ ” (p. 1). He developed this idea further:

The first ‘system’ is well resourced, consisting mainly of former white and Indian schools, and a small but growing independent sector. The first ‘system’ produces the majority of university entrants and

⁴ ‘Letter from the President’ (2003) ANC Today 3(45) November 14-20.

graduates, the vast majority of students graduating with higher-grade mathematics and science. Enrolling the children of the elite, white-middle and new black middle-classes, the first system does a good job in ensuring that most children in its charge acquire literacy and mathematics competences that are comparable to those of middle-class children anywhere in the world. The second school 'system' enrolls the vast majority of working-class and poor children. Because they bring their health, family and community difficulties with them into the classroom, the second primary school 'system' struggles to ameliorate young people's deficits in institutions that are in themselves less than adequate. In seven years of schooling, children in the second system do learn, but acquire a much more restricted set of knowledge and skills than the children in the first system (Fleisch, 2008).

Evidence from studies suggests that schools in the 'Second Economy' continue to lag behind their better resourced counterparts. Spaull (2012) provides interesting insight into the two school systems that operate in the South African space. He uses the term bimodality to describe the "dualistic nature of the primary education system in South Africa" (p. 2). For the purposes of his study he separated the statistics and looked at previously 'white' and previously 'black' schools in the post-apartheid era, separating them into the 25% wealthiest and 75% poorest. While the state's way of reporting hides the true divide between the wealthiest and poorest, his analysis exposes the stark differences in the two school systems. Van der Berg's study (2007, p. 851) acknowledges those divisions:

The conclusions are alarming in that they show that quality differentials between schools are large and enduring, that despite fiscal resource shifts there has been little reduction in these differentials, and that there are major impediments to overcoming these qualitative differences in school performance.

Reddy, van der Berg, Janse van Rensburg & Taylor (2012) state that "The South African school system can be seen as being made up of two historically and persistently differently functioning subsystems" (p. 88). As Van der Berg explains above, resource shifts towards poorer schools has not significantly changed that.

The on-going service delivery protests around the country in the past few years are indicators that problems associated with poverty, symptomatic of what Mbeki called the Second Economy, are not being addressed. Bond provides an alternate view that pinpoints the capitalist economy as responsible for the increase in poverty and lack of redress in terms of service delivery. He uses Marx's views to expound on the continuing crisis in capitalism and the overarching theory of uneven development:

Karl Marx regarded uneven development as a necessary process under capitalism by arguing that 'in the same relations in which wealth is produced, poverty is produced also'. This 'absolute general law of capitalist accumulation', as he termed it, means that some economic sectors and geographical areas rise and others decline, but in a manner that does not achieve equilibrium, as free market economists

would assume, but instead continually polarises. Such is the case on the world scale, but also in South Africa. (Bond, 2000, p. 5; Marx, 1946, p. 668)

Marketisation of education is a global phenomenon that emerged following the dismantling of welfarism in Europe (Chisholm, 2004a). In South Africa the argument for the introduction of school fees because it would “forestall a flight of the middle class to private schools” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 5) resulted in education becoming a “consumer good” (Soudien, Jacklin, & Hoadley, 2001, p. 79). One of the key demands of the anti-apartheid struggle was for free, universal, quality education. The privatisation and semi-privatisation of education removed the burden of the state for the full provision of education for all. Dysfunctional schools in the township areas has resulted in the flight of thousands of children from poor working class areas to better functioning state schools such as *Good Hope School*. In his study Fataar (2007b) observed the migration of thousands of learners from township areas to schools in more affluent areas the Cape. The commodification of education has entrenched a “state of almost permanent subordination” (Soudien et al., 2001, p. 80) for poor black people who cannot migrate to better functioning schools.

Motala (2009) states: “the majority of learners cannot exercise choice and have access to better-resourced schools” (p. 199). Poverty traps them in areas where better functioning schools are few. The evidence related to levels of poverty is alarming. Berry and Guthrie, (2003) state that nearly 60% (11 million) of all children in South Africa live in dire poverty on less than R200 per month (Vally, 2005).

The *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 1975) sought to “rescue education from the influence of the ruling class” (p. 50) and highlighted education as a weapon that could be used to fight the bourgeoisie. Kellner (no date), in his interpretation of the Marxist standpoint, explained that more than a century ago Karl Marx and Frederick Engels understood that without education the working class were condemned to lives of “drudgery and death” but with education they had a chance to “create a better life” (p. 2). The conventional view that education is the key to success fails to adequately interrogate the reasons why so few poor people are able to move out of poverty. Vally (2005) suggests that “the liberal conception of rights is based on the notion that those who succeed in society do so because of their own individual attributes and those who fail

to do so because of their deficits and weaknesses” (p. 43). He contends that this view is possible because:

the philosophical foundation of the dominant human rights discourse sees human beings as individuals instead of as social beings – products of a web of relations: social, economic and political from which social relations arise (2005).

He challenges the notion of conventional wisdom that “education can serve as the life raft to rescue people from the sea of protracted poverty” (2005, p. 43). Instead he argues that:

...while enthusiasm for education abounds amongst the poor, various social and economic relations, influences and factors prevent the overcoming of deprivation. This, despite progressive legislation and our Constitution that guarantees the right to basic education and democratic citizenship (2005).

In the post-1994 period South Africa underwent significant policy changes in education that were expected to eradicate inequities that were a consequence of the legacy of apartheid. Yet, in spite of an abundance of international expertise, political support and inputs from both ordinary educators and academics in the early years, many of the policy ideals are not evident in classrooms around the country (Sayed & Jansen, 2001, p. 2). Jansen’s (2001) explanation that “the making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism to mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society” (p. 272) highlights the notion that education policy initiatives have merely been large-scale gestures unsupported by concrete, workable plans for substantial, meaningful change.

Fleisch (2008) asks, “Why is poverty such a strong predictor of poor achievement?” (p. 51) Hirsch (2007) found that the different experiences of children both in the classroom as well as outside the classroom contributed explicitly to their learning. Those experiences were responsible for the way learners perceived their own realities and responded to learning and the learning environment. Hirsch (2007) explained:

A key feature of this difference is that children from less advantaged backgrounds are more likely to feel a lack of control over and less involvement in their learning, and so have a greater tendency to become reluctant recipients of the taught curriculum. This relates both to children’s attitudes towards learning and to their relationships with adults.

Poverty has a cyclical nature so that family disadvantage is transmitted across generations. Hirsch (2007) uses research to show that someone who has grown up in poverty is disadvantaged well into adulthood because people from disadvantaged homes are less likely to get good

educational qualifications. He explains that socio-economic circumstances in childhood result in low qualifications in adulthood transmitting poverty across generations. Furthermore:

A primary cause of child poverty is a lack of opportunities among parents with low skills and low qualifications. Such parents are less likely to work, and if they do work they are more likely to have low earnings. The task of balancing the economic demands of raising a family and the need to find time to devote to children is much harder for people in low-paid jobs with limited power to negotiate working arrangements. Where parents have to make a choice between low income and long hours, it is difficult to give children good life chances (Hirsch, 2007).

According to Berry and Guthri (2003) the difficulties of children in South Africa who live in poverty are grim. They explain:

Many children living in poverty report being denied access to basic education because they cannot afford to pay school fees or purchase school uniforms. Many learners do not have access to educational resources in their homes and schools, and live in households that lack basic necessities, including food. Findings indicate a high level of unemployment among parents of school-going children. Children in families affected by HIV are particularly at risk. Over 1.2 million children of school-going age are not attending school, mainly because of poverty and deprivation in their home environments.

Hirsch (2007) argues that only through an understanding of the varied factors that influence social differences in education does it become possible to design effective responses in policy and practice. He therefore suggests that “equality of educational opportunity cannot rely solely on better delivery of the school curriculum for disadvantaged groups, but must address multiple aspects of disadvantaged children’s lives” (2007, p. 1).

From the above analysis, it is clear that the relationship between education and poverty is complex. The denial of an equitable education experience to poor learners means that their life choices are limited. This study seeks to investigate the kind of education learners, at a school that regards itself as under-funded, receive given the apartheid historical legacy and in the context of the economic and policy choices of the present South African government. It is imperative that both the quality of education and the conditions for learners in the schools of the poor are unpacked or disaggregated. I intend to probe how the poor experience exclusions from the school system enjoyed by the middle class and the more affluent members of society. I will focus on individuals within social contexts of the school, family and community and explore the underlying experience of inequality.

The idea for this study comes from Giroux’s (1981) lament that he has been unable to find:

a systematic theoretical approach to a radical analysis of the day-by-day socio-political texture of classroom structure and interaction, i.e. how specific forms of knowledge and meaning penetrate, develop, and are transmitted within the context of the classroom experience (p. 63).

This study therefore locates itself within the classrooms of a school that regards itself as poor and under-funded and investigates the day-to-day school experience of learners in the school.

1.3 Outlining the Journey

This study is titled, '*An ethnographic exploration of the day-to-day texture of the school life poor children*'.

As articulated previously, the study explores the research questions through a theoretical grounding in space and time. The journey as projected in the original research proposal has taken on new dimensions as I not only explore the lives of the learners through their expression of their present realities, but historically through a time capsule located in the school logs.

“History,” says Michael Samuels, “is not about the past” (Wassermann & Bryan, 2010, p. 9). In his opinion it is about how we remember the past. Yet, it is that past that dictates many of our actions and way of being in the present. In this study I therefore take cognisance of the past and view the present through lenses illuminated through a past we think we know and which we continue to learn to know.

Through a process of networking I link the past to the present. The networking reveals the continuities and discontinuities situated in time and space and explores social realities that impact on the way learners experience education. The two research questions are:

1. *What are learners' day-to-day experiences of school life at a school that regards itself as poor?*
2. *Why do those learners experience school life in the way they do?*

The historical dimension provides a unique lens through which the present everyday lives of the learners is understood. The networking takes the reader on a unique journey that explores the experiences of the learners through multiple lenses that shift locations and realities through the lens of the researcher, the voices of the participants, the location of the research, exclusive

photographs and present day life in the immediate global space occupied by the learners. It is grounded in the geographical and historical space of the school but networked through the learners' experiences situated in their multiplied⁵ lives as well as the cyber realities of the global world we occupy. The learners are located at the centre of the network.

⁵ Multiply is having more than one layer or fold as some shells or leaves or when used as an adjective means rare or manifold (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/multiply>)

Chapter 2: Methodology and Research Design

2.1 Introduction

I have chosen critical ethnography as my methodological approach, allied with actor network theory and various theoretical constructs that help to unravel the lived everyday experiences of the learners in this study. As with Paul Willis' ethnographic work, my interest is in how the everyday and the social imagination are brought together. Willis (2000) sets ethnography as the grounding for the exploration of "the range of imaginative meanings within social thought" (p. viii) . This study does not only rely on what I, as the researcher, have uncovered while closely observing and researching the learners in the context of their classroom and school but draws on historical data to create a contiguity across space and time. As Brown and Capdevila (1999) recognised, "Pivotal... is the sense of how very different events and apparently diverse territories can be brought into contiguity or folded up together" (p. 26). The study therefore draws on the spatial context of the school that includes its surrounds and issues of historical significance. It integrates the past into the present to make sense of the way education is organised and how learners experience their learning.

As the study unravels the day-to-day texture of the school life of children, it positions itself in the physical, social, pedagogical and historical context of the school environment to investigate the daily lived experiences of the children. The conceptual framework for the study is set within a critical ethnographic approach and is supported by the theoretical concepts of space and time studied through the lenses of everyday life.

Firstly, I interrogate ethnography, drawing on experts in the field and ethnographic research that is relevant for this study. Secondly, I expound on actor network theory and how it will be used in this study. Thirdly, I explain how the research was conducted and how the thesis will be analysed and presented.

2.2 Ethnographic Research

2.2.1 Introduction

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology. According to Wolcott (1975), the term ethnography is, literally, “an anthropologist's ‘picture’ of the way of life of some interacting human group; or, viewed as process, ethnography is the science of cultural description” (p. 112). Ethnography is unique in that it is committed to understand and convey how it is “to walk in someone else’s shoes” and “to tell it like it is” (Wolcott, 1975, p. 113). In addition, Wolcott cautions that ethnography is also about the way participants say it *ought* to be. It is regarded as important in social research that attempts to unravel how people make sense of the world in everyday life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993, p. 2). Spradley (1979) posits the view that “rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*” (p. 3). It therefore, “starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance” (p. 4).

Ethnography is recognised as having enabled children to be seen as authentic research participants. James (2001) maintains that ethnography, as a research methodology, has facilitated a recognition of children as research participants who could be studied in their own right. James emphasises that ethnography is an interpretive approach that incorporates a range of techniques, including casual conversations, ‘thick’ field notes and structured or unstructured interviews. Important in her understanding is that ethnography entails “the desire to engage with children’s own views and enables their views and ideas to be rendered accessible to adults as well as other children” (2001, p. 247).

In ethnography data collection methods are intended to encapsulate the ordinary social meanings and activities of participants in their natural settings. Multiple methods of data collection are used to ensure that the researcher’s bias in the research process is minimal and data can be cross checked for accuracy. To ensure that the researcher is cognisant of her own role in the data collection she maintains a journal in which she records her involvement in the research.

Van Maanen (2011), in the preface of *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*, describes ethnography as the practice of representing others through representing one’s own experience in

the world of those others. He highlights the peculiar stance of the ethnographer in the lives of the participants: the ethnographer is uniquely positioned, firstly as an outsider, but eventually as a transformed participant in the process of the strange and unfamiliar becoming the known as the ethnographer becomes the interpreter of the recorded experiences. Van Maanen interprets the ethnographer's position as between the two worlds of meaning: the world of the ethnographer and the world of the participants in the ethnographic process. In ethnographic accounts, the participants' views and ways of being are paramount. While the ethnographer is aware of her own subjective realities which influence her interpretation of those views and create limitations to the study, she nevertheless endeavours to accurately portray the world of the participants. Van Maanen cautions that ethnographic reports are as much created by the writing as they determine the writing itself: as the ethnographer reconstructs into text the experiences of the participants, the report is imbued with the interpretation of the ethnographer.

2.2.2 Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography refers to studies which use an anthropological, qualitative, participant-observer methodology and rely on theoretical formulation from a body of theory derived from critical sociology and philosophy (Masemann, 1982). The elaborate data analysis procedures used by ethnographers make this research method appealing to educationists because they protect them from accusations of "mere story telling" (Anderson, 1989, p. 252). In common with other ethnographers, critical ethnographers "aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding" (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). Like interpretivist ethnographers, they view the cultural informant's perceptions of social reality as theoretical constructs (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). However, it is in the critical ethnographer's claim that "informant reconstructions are often permeated with meanings that sustain powerlessness and that people's conscious models exist to perpetuate, as much as to explain, social phenomena" that they differ from other ethnographers (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). Critical ethnographers, according to Anderson (1989), support the view that "the ideological nature of knowledge resides in the embeddedness of commonsense knowledge (and social science knowledge as well) in political and economic interests" (p. 254).

Critical ethnographers share an understanding of the importance of reflexive engagement with the data. To put it more pointedly, reflexivity in critical ethnography "involves a dialectical

process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informant's commonsense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study" (Anderson, 1989, pp. 254-255).

Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2001) make an observation that is important for the way in which critical ethnography emerges in this study. They argue that since critical ethnography is still in its infancy it redefines itself through associations with other theoretical currents, thereby clouding the boundaries between ethnography and other critical research. They maintain that critical pedagogy must start from where the students are and build on experiences that have meaning for them. Their view, related to the changing nature of critical research, is supported by the views of Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) who assert that there is no blueprint because there are many critical theories and the critical tradition is always changing and evolving.

2.2.3 Value Orientation of Critical Researchers

Carspecken (1996) captures the essence of the value orientation of what critical theorists uphold: "Criticalists find contemporary society to be unfair, unequal and both subtly and overtly oppressive of many people" (p. 7). He emphasises though that the exact nature of oppression is an empirical question and not a given belief. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) are scornful of the 'proper method' typically used in research as it fails to capture the humanistic purpose of the research and the understanding that in the production of 'facts' value choices are involved. Carspecken too is critical of research that purports to be neutral as research, he says, is value driven.

2.2.4 Critical Epistemology

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) advise that critical ethnographers should use critical epistemology in order to maintain epistemological principles that are applicable to all researchers. They advise that critical ethnographers need to "understand holistic modes of human experience and their relationship to communicative structures" (2002, p. 120). Part of the process that they recommend is encapsulated by Carspecken (1996) through the suggestion of probing researcher bias and uncovering researchers' value positioning.

Carspecken (1996) acknowledges that critical epistemological theory is indebted to American pragmatists like John Dewey. There is a fluidity in the way critical theorists use concepts like ‘social structure’, ‘culture’, and ‘social reproduction’ as they are under continuous scrutiny in empirical studies. Relationships between power and thought and power and truth claims are important parts of critical epistemology. He states, “Unequal power distorts truth claims” to emphasise how “power corrupts knowledge” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 21) that he purports is central to critical epistemology. Basic value orientations like democracy, equality and human empowerment are merged with epistemological prerequisites.

2.2.5 Multiple Ontological Categories

Carspecken (1996, p. 20) defines ontologies as theories about existence that make it possible to formulate diverse truth claims. The ontological arguments are closely aligned to the epistemology. He sets out three categories of truth claims (subjective, objective and normative evaluative) that he says need special kinds of support in order to gain the approval of others. Objective validity claims are linked to contentions about the world; subjective reality claims are about the self in the world, emotions, purposes and consciousness; and normative evaluative validity claims are about positioning in relation to others, cultural values and the world as it is or should be.

He uses the pragmatic philosophical argument that asserts that truth can be defined through an agreement to truth claims. Those truth claims he says are imperfect and change as circumstances change. Critical epistemology therefore concentrates on validity more than truth. While there is agreement on a single objective reality represented in language, symbols and mediated by power relations, Carspecken (1996) emphasises that it is the nature of validity rather than truth that “gives critical epistemology its methodological rigor” (p. 57). Carspecken references multiple realities as different manifestations depicted through various interpretive schemes of the same reality.

2.2.6 Contextualising Ethnography for this Study

Ethnography was chosen for this study because it presented me, as the researcher, with the opportunity to observe learners’ experiences first hand in their natural setting. As an

ethnographer I had a direct view into the world in which learning happened, which created opportunities to better understand learners' experiences – the objective of this ethnographic project. The various relationships, influences and power structures in the classroom setting were scrutinised and recorded as they happened. The classroom and school setting also provided me with opportunities to investigate the coincidental/unexpected occurrences that happened in the daily lived lives of the participants. During the observation I recorded events as they occurred and had the opportunity to record the full range of events during the course of the day which created learning patterns in my own observation and adjustments to my own biases and prejudices through accurate recording. The long period of engagement in the field allowed me to become aware of nuances and subtleties in participants' behaviour patterns. The detailed ethnographic research process that was used is explained later in this chapter.

The observation by Gordon et al (2001, p. 188) that unlike anthropologists, whose task is to make the strange familiar, a school ethnographer's task is to make the familiar strange, was applicable to this study. As a former learner and as an experienced classroom based teacher I was generally familiar with processes in the field of study: the school.

In respect to this study I am particularly interested in the style of ethnography outlined by Willis in *The Ethnographic Imagination*. Willis (2000) is interested in how the everyday and the social imagination are brought together. He sets ethnography as grounding for the exploration of "the range of imaginative meanings within social thought" (p. viii). I therefore ally ethnography with various theoretical constructs that help to unravel the lived everyday cultural experiences of the school children I have identified. Willis' particular interest in the way hegemonic cultural forms produce contradictions is relevant to this study. While the context is situated in the lives of learners, his analysis in terms of social class relations remains relevant.

2.2.6.1 The Importance of Paul Willis' Ethnographic Study

Willis (2000) uses Marx's concepts of commodities and fetishisms to develop his ideas for his *Ethnographic Imagination*. He looks at the cultural commodity form as such, both descriptively and theoretically. He uses Marx's understanding of the commodity, which he says is at the heart of "exploring the inner workings of the capitalist system" (p. 52). Indeed, the first part of the first chapter of Volume I of Marx' *Capital* is titled *Commodities and Money*. Marx (1938) defines a

commodity as “...an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort” (p. 1). Willis (2000) explores Marx’s symbolism, saying that the commodity seems to “obfuscate rather than communicate, obscuring what made it a sign” (p. 53). For Willis, the importance of a commodity is what it promises to do in order to satisfy a human desire.

Marx (1938) warns of simply seeing a commodity as “a very trivial thing, and easily understood” (p. 41). He explains that in fact commodities abound in “metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (p. 41). At face value, commodities have no mystery attached to them. It is through the social relationship that attaches itself to the commodity that it assumes a mysterious character, which Marx calls fetishism. Willis develops Marx’s ideas of fetishism to theorise about symbolism inherent in commodities. An understanding of fetishisms within the context of the cultural commodity is essential for unpacking the complexities of school life.

Willis (2003) positions the school as “the site and instrument through which cultural responses to material conditions are played out” (p. 390). He posits that “waves of attempted economic and technical modernization ‘from above’ are often antagonistically related to waves of cultural modernization ‘from below’, which are usually misunderstood” (p. 391). He contends that the youth are the first to experience the problems associated with technical and economic modernisation in capitalist societies. Young people’s responses, which may be chaotic and disorganised, may be misconstrued by adults as they appear to be strange, shocking and anti-social.

In his book, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*, Willis exposes the peculiarities of the working class way of life. His ethnographic work on working class children provided new insight into the ordinary lives of those children, even though he was criticised for romanticizing working class rebels and being guilty of ‘over-rapport’ and ‘identifying’ with his chosen ‘lads’ to the exclusion of others who conformed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993, pp. 98-99). Willis answers differently the question posed by Fleisch (2008), “Why is poverty such a strong predictor of poor achievement?” . In his (2003) study, he finds that the young men, referred to as the ‘lads,’ had a low interest in and hostility to academic work. Within their cultural milieu it was acceptable to pursue low status jobs resulting in “the generational replacement of individuals in unequal class positions” (p. 393). Willis sees elements of rationality in resistant cultural practices that are hegemonically defined as pathological by teachers and administrators. It is logical to him that working class youth understand that their chances of getting out of the working class are extremely

limited for as long as class society exists. In his view, the meritocratic education system favours the middle classes and further alienates working class youth, releasing alternate cultural expression that challenges “collusion in their own exclusion” (p. 394) . The anti-mentalist attitude of the ‘lads’ reconciles them to a life of unstable/insecure manual work that results in job hopping and frequent unemployment as well as a negative and cynical view of mental work.

Willis (2003) is aware that schools now face even larger challenges but he believes they fail to comprehend the complexity of emerging identities and cultural formations. The lack of jobs lends support to the argument that school attendance has no value.

This ethnographic study provides further insight into these realities in the South African context. To add to the complexity, education has become a commodity. The mysteries attached to this commodity are interrogated in this thesis.

2.2.6.2 Ethnographic Studies in South Africa

The ethnographic research conducted by Fataar (2007b) in a township on the outskirts of Cape Town underscores and captures the ever changing identity construction of South Africa’s youth as well as the complexity of schooling in township schools. He focused on “young people’s identification adaptations in their interaction with schooling” (p. 9). He studied high school learners who attended different schools outside their area in spite of there being five high schools operating in the area where they lived. He found support for his study in the research of Sekete, Shilubane and Moila (2001) conducted at 120 selected urban schools in five provinces, which found that 49% of students attended schools outside of their residential area.

The children who were dislocated from their township homes were mostly from the formerly disadvantaged race groups and attended former ‘Model C’ schools. While the racial demographics of the student populations of those schools had changed, the teaching fraternity remained predominantly ‘white’. Students had been integrated into the schools through a process of assimilation that supported the dominant discourse and “culturally white” ethos of the school (Fataar, 2007b, p. 10). Fataar’s (2007b) study investigated emergent student identities arising as students navigated the predominant ethos oppositional to their own cultural experiences. Crucial to his investigation was an understanding of their “social spaces attribution” (2007b, p. 12) as they interacted with, steered through and adapted to changing places and spaces.

Fataar (2007b) adapts Smith's (2005) notion of transnationalism to develop an understanding of "the mobile identity constructions of the youth" (p. 14). Smith explains the aim of transnationalism as analysing the social organisation and consequences of the complex interconnectivity of cross-border networks in multiple fields of social practice. Fataar (2007b) uses the adapted term 'translocation' to describe movement and adaptation of "young kids who wake up 'culturally black' in an impoverished city space and move daily through the city landscape to enter the culturally dissonant spaces of their new schools" (p. 14).

In order to appreciate Fataar's analysis, it is important to understand Lefebvre's notion of space and time. Lefebvre is critical of the concept of space seen as "an empty zone" or "a container indifferent to its content" (Elden, Lebas, & Kofman, 2003, p. 206). Rather, he sees the changed meaning of space and time as social products that reflect both metaphorical and material practices.

In another study Fataar (2007a) illuminates how expectations of multiracialism in the post-apartheid era have been subverted by complex counter forces driven by poverty stricken communities which create new means of survival in new spatial and cultural terrains. The racial divisions produced and cemented during the apartheid era have re-emerged and developed into "racialised boundaries and networks" (Fataar, 2007a, p. 604) .

Accelerated and under-developed urbanization following the overthrow of the Bantustan system, in the post-apartheid period, produced cities in which informal settlements have flourished. Fataar's concern is about how alternate livelihoods, not absorbed in the formal infrastructures of city life, are constituted and the terms on which social practices are established. His interest is in how urban residents on the periphery of the developing world adapt to their social spatial contexts and how the township's social dynamics help shape school processes.

A study of the adaptations of school principals in the area Fataar (2009a) renamed *Rustvale*, titled *The reflexive adaptations of school principals in a 'local' South African space*, not only explores the identities of three school principals but also shows the impact of township life on the school community. The stark realities of township life dictated the terms on which the principals negotiated their survival both through legal and illegal means. Their pedagogical roles as principals were directly informed by the social realities of the township. The strategic adaptation to their environment

ensured they were able to create “an authoritative platform for their principal roles” (p. 315) and therefore survive under difficult conditions.

The attitude of the principal at a school called *Amethyst* in a study by Amin (2008) contrasted with that of the principals at *Rustvale*. At *Amethyst* the male principal, concerned with “self-preservation” (165), played a hugely different role. He remained hidden and separate from both the educators and learners. Reluctance on the part of the principal and another male educator to handle problems head-on because of their fear of violent retaliations resulted in a lack of respect for authority on the part of learners, which further exacerbated the discipline problems that the educators experienced, rendering them powerless.

An interesting ethnographic study that contrasts with Fataar’s study pertaining to the identity construction of South African youth in a former ‘Model C’ environment is a study of ‘white’ youth. Dolby (2001) studied ‘white’ learners at a predominantly ‘black’ high school in Durban (called *Ferndale* in the study) that was previously for ‘white’ learners only. She found that the ‘white’ students, “unhinged from a position of privilege” (p. 5), were resentful of the position they found themselves in in the post-apartheid period and re-centred themselves as victims looking for a ticket into the global world of contested “privileged whiteness” (p. 5). The identity constructs of the ‘white’ youth were grounded in fear, supported by their minority status in a school they identified as ‘theirs’ but which was occupied by majority ‘black’ learners, and supported by a belief that upwardly mobile, violent ‘black’ people were a threat to their stability and future.

As she explores the “production of race and racial politics among students” (1999, p. 291), Dolby also analyses the role of popular culture (using music specifically) in emerging youth identities. She explores new meanings of race, racial identities and race relations. She uses Willis’ understanding of ‘common culture’ to explain the notion of popular culture. She develops further Willis’ idea that youth are not passive recipients of popular culture but rather select specific commodities that they find meaningful. In particular, Dolby brings together the global and local as the terrains for the development of youth identities. In her study she argues that in the context of South Africa, given the legacy of apartheid, popular cultural practices at *Fernwood* in 1996 were intertwined with racial and class dynamics.

This study draws on the ethnography conducted in other school situations but establishes new lenses through which the learners are observed. It establishes multiplied contexts of space and time that help to reconfigure our understanding of why learners in a particular context experience education the way they do. The study uses actor network theory, which provides a unique way in which an ethnographic study can be optimally viewed and explored.

2.3 Actor Network Theory

2.3.1 What is Actor Network Theory?

Actor network theory (ANT) is also known as the *sociology of translation* and supports the notion that social relations are interrelated with the material and natural world (Whittle & Spicer, 2008). ANT uses the term actant to denote human and non-human actors. The actants assume form through relations with one another. There is no difference between humans, technology, animals or other non-humans in terms of their ability to act. An action means that the actant becomes embroiled in a web/network of relations.

Important to ANT is the distinction between mediators and intermediaries. Mediators and intermediaries are what, according to Latour (2007a, p. 40), produces the differences between the two types of sociologies. Sociologists of the social, he claims, believe in few mediators and many intermediaries while ANT shows endless numbers of mediators. Mediators alter, interpret, misrepresent and adapt the meaning of that which they are supposed to carry. Intermediaries transport meaning without changing it: the output is the same as the input (Latour, 2007a, p. 39).

The concept of translation is another innovation used by ANT. It takes on a specialist meaning as “a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexistence” and therefore there exists “translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations” (Latour, 2007a, p. 108).

An important aspect of understanding ANT for this thesis is the way we are able to perceive networks without thinking about their parts. For example, we refer to the government as a single entity but on closer consideration realise that it is made up of numerous networks. We also think of the human body as a single entity and only consider the mechanisms involved when

something goes wrong and we are forced to consider the separate elements that contribute to its smooth function. It appears that we naturally simplify our view and conceal the excess information. We simplify our view and only see what in essence disguises the networks that produce it. Law (1992) asks, “Why is it that the networks which make up the actor come to be deleted, or concealed from view? And why is this sometimes not the case?” (p. 385) He suggests that:

...if a network acts as a single block, then it disappears, to be replaced by the action itself and the seemingly simple author of that action. At the same time, the way in which the effect is generated is also effaced: for the time being it is neither visible, nor relevant. So it is that something much simpler – a working television, a well-managed bank or a healthy body – comes, for a time, to mask the networks that produce it.

The above effects are referred to by actor network theorists as *punctualisations*. In the course of heterogeneous engineering, complex network patterns are punctualised because they are generally of a routine nature and “run wide and deep” (John Law, 1992, p. 385). Through “local processes of patterning, social orchestration, ordering and resistance... the process that is often called *translation*” (John Law, 1992, p. 386) is explored.

Central to the actor-network approach is:

a concern with how actors and organizations mobilise, juxtapose and hold together the bits and pieces out of which they are composed; how they are sometimes able to prevent those bits and pieces from following their own inclinations and making off; and how they manage, as a result, to conceal for a time the process of translation itself and so turn a network from a heterogeneous set of bits and pieces each with its own inclinations, into something that passes as a punctualized actor (John Law, 1992).

Law (1992) lists four general findings related to empirical translation. The following two are relevant for this study:

- Durability is about ordering through time. Durable materials maintain their relational patterns for longer... However, he warns that durable material forms may find other uses and so their *effects* may change when they are located in new networks of relations.
- Mobility is about ordering through space. Centres and peripheries are effects too - generated by surveillance and control. However, while it has some affinity with Foucault, actor network theorists explore materials and processes of communication.

2.3.2 Using Actor Network Theory (ANT)

In this thesis, ANT is adapted as the toolkit most appropriate to deal with a range of qualitative research techniques. This is not in keeping with its traditional use, but ANT lends itself to unravelling the multiple perspectives that unfold in ethnography. It is useful for exploring relational ties between networks and explaining how the networks act as a whole. The networks are constantly changing and in performance mode are held together by complex relationships. ANT is applied in this study because it is said to be “a useful way of thinking about how spatial relations come to be wrapped up into complex networks” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 357). In that understanding of space it is seen as neither fixed nor absolute, thereby creating the possibility of exploration of space without geographical boundaries and preconceived notions that limit investigation. In addition, the theory provides a means of navigating complex realities between the past and the present. It provides the framework which enables the researcher to explore multiple realities through exploring links by networking.

The words *actor* and *network* are oxymoronic and they open discourse on structure and agency (Law, 1999). Latour (1999) states:

It was never a theory of what the social is made of, contrary to the reading of many sociologists who believed it was one more school trying to explain the behaviour of social actors. For us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it... Far from being a theory of the social or even worse an explanation of what makes society exert pressure on actors, it always was, and this from its inception, a very crude method to learn from the actors without imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world building capacities.

Mol (1999) has argued that reality is “historically, culturally and materially located” (p. 75) and is therefore multiple. Every actor/participant in a research project brings his/her own reality to the study. The perspective of the individual carries with it an expertise that is unique to that person. This creates a plurality of meanings (perhaps on the same issue) depending on the individual’s perspective. A plurality of meanings also emerges in historical analysis. Through historical evidence I present some of the constructions of history based on a particular set of historical data that is explored through an individual’s perspective. The pluralities of constructions create diverse historical perspectives with an inherent set of biases and prejudices.

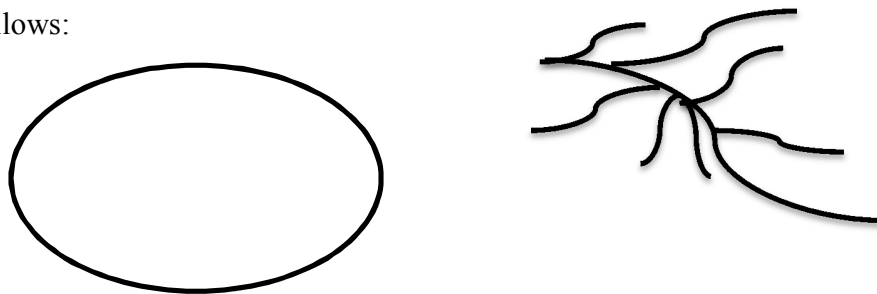
“Space is bound into networks and any assessment of spatial qualities is simultaneously

an assessment of network relations” (Murdoch, 1997, p. 332). This statement clarifies my contention that an understanding of space emerges through an exploration of the networks. In ANT the word *network* is not used only in the technological sense that we have become used to in the world of networking established through the internet. It includes another kind of networking, as Latour (1996) explains:

An actor network may lack all the characteristics of a technical network - it may be local, it may have no compulsory paths, no strategically positioned nodes (p. 1).

In ANT one has to follow the actors themselves and “try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish” (Latour, 2005, p. 12). However, unlike other traditional methods of sociological research that focus on human beings, actors are deemed to be both human and non-human.

Latour (1996, p. 2) explains that rather than seeing surfaces one gets filaments. He illustrates this as follows:



The change of topology alters thinking from focusing in a two or three dimensional way to being able to “think in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they have connections”. This radical shift enables networks to develop greater versatility and strength because of the realisation that ties may be weak by themselves but “each tie, no matter how strong, is itself woven out of still weaker threads” (Latour, 1996, p. 2).

Latour (2005, p. 21) captures the complexities inherent in sociological investigation. He says:

...it’s always the paradoxical presence of something at once invisible yet tangible, taken for granted yet surprising, mundane but of baffling subtlety that triggers a passionate attempt to tame the wild beast of the social.

This study looks into the mundane for a better understanding of the texture and complexity of the schooling experience of the learners at *Good Hope School*. ANT provides a way by which different views can be presented as a unified theoretical perspective “stitched together across divisions and distinctions” (Murdoch, 1997, p. 322).

Distance becomes differently understood to the limitations placed on our thinking in the way we have been taught to think of distance in geographical terms using metres and scale. ANT debunks the notion that distance is necessarily quantifiable in social terms. Latour (1996) uses the example of being closer to someone who is thousands of kilometres away whom one is speaking to on a telephone than one is to the stranger standing right outside the telephone booth. ANT theorists argue:

The notion of network allows us to lift the tyranny of social theorists and to regain some margin of manoeuvres between the ingredients of society - its vertical space, its hierarchy, its layering, its macro scale, its wholeness, its overarching character- and how these features are achieved and which stuff they are made of. Instead of having to choose between the local and the global view, the notion of network allows us to think of a global entity -a highly connected one- which remains nevertheless continuously local... Instead of opposing the individual level to the mass, or the agency to the structure, we simply follow how a given element becomes strategic through the number of connections it commands and how does it lose its importance when losing its connections (Latour, 1996).

Since the network is established through linear parameters, there is no space between, no area around, no surface inside or outside. Space is studied through connections and associations.

According to its leading theorist, Latour, ANT “is not about traced networks but about a network tracing activity” (Latour, 1996, p. 11). This implies that it is the movement of the actant that is important. The network is the recorded movement of the thing. What is important is “what moves and how this movement is recorded” (Latour, 1996, p. 11).

This study uses Latour’s suggestion that research is about tracing network activity to delve into the lives and experiences of learners through historical, social and educational lenses. It is a project that attempts to make visible that which is hidden behind decades of history and normalised practices in the educational arena. As has been explained, networks become invisible through punctualisation. This study investigates the experiences of learners in the classroom by unravelling multiplied realities in space and time.

In the following sections I unpack how the data was collected and how it was analysed using the preceding methodological foundations.

2.4 Research Design

2.4.1 Study Context and Participants

The site for this study was a primary school situated in the city of Durban that I have renamed *Good Hope School*. It has a particular spatial positioning that is important. I chose it because of my general understanding of its demographics as well as its geographic and social positioning. It is a former ‘Model C’ school that is now populated by the learners from the surrounding ‘black’ townships as well as learners from the neighbouring (locales) of generally rundown flats occupied by both South Africans (from disadvantaged groups) as well as refugees and migrants from various countries in Africa.

The social systems supporting the school are complex. The school caters for both poor and middle class learners who live in an environment that is teeming with drug lords, sex workers and other elements deemed to be part of the under-class. Alongside the poor flat dwellers are the wealthy upper middle class inhabitants who do not use the school space.

This study situates itself in the micro spaces revealed in the daily lived school experiences of the learners. Emmison and Smith (2000) provide some guidance as to how to make social space more observable and researchable. They make the point that the “visual is also spatial” (p. 5). This study therefore, in addition to traditional ethnographic tools like observation and interviews, uses visual data to explore the prime focus of the research: *What are learners’ day-to-day experiences of school life at a school that regards itself as poor?*

A Grade Six class was selected for the study. The entire class was closely studied to unravel their daily experiences of school life. Ten learners from the class and one learner from an adjacent class were selected for further in-depth interviews. The researcher spent a period of approximately four months (from May 2011 to October 2011 – barring holidays) in the classroom observing the daily school life of the learners.

2.4.2 Collection, Generation and Analysis of Data

The ethnographic approach requires stringent controls to protect the authenticity of the study. Rosen (1991) says, “Ethnography is a method for both data collection and analysis, each irrevocably mated to the other” (p. 1). The design therefore followed the clear guidelines for the critical ethnographer suggested by Carspecken (1996). His four phases were adapted to provide a structure that was useful for the research project.

2.4.2.1 Phase 1 – Collection of Monologic Data

2.4.2.1.1 Observation and Collection of Thick Field Notes

In the first phase of the research I, as the researcher, embedded myself in the life of the school. I use the word embed to envision an invisibility attained through familiarity rather than the erroneous assumption of becoming an “immersed insider” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 189). Firstly, I familiarized myself with the general day-to-day running of the school. I was allocated to a Grade Six class (selected by the management team and with the agreement of the class teacher) where I conducted observations for the duration of the period I stayed at the school.

I became a familiar presence in the school. At first I was regarded as a novelty but as the learners got used to me they sometimes acted as if I was one of them. At other times they treated me as if I was one of their teachers and sometimes appealed to me to intervene in their conflicts or asked me for help if they did not understand the work. Mostly I was ignored and left to my own devices. I was aware of also being observed and being regarded as an audience which was watching them. The initial grandstanding of the learners could not be sustained, and they eventually regarded me as a part of the class.

I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded my own thoughts about what I was observing. My notes also reflected what was happening outside of the classroom space. The idea of such a journal is in keeping with the idea that an ethnographer should be aware of the pitfalls (one’s own biases and prejudices) inherent in forming opinions with regard to observation. It is advised that observations should be accompanied by self-reflexivity to interrogate personal feelings and other subjective reactions. Attempting to eliminate the effects of the researcher on the research

process is futile. Reflexivity helps to contextualise and understand those effects (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993, p. 17).

Detailed field notes were kept. The primary record is both thick as well as more journalistic depending on the context in which the recording was made. Carspecken's (1996, pp. 48-49) suggested method of using a 'priority person' for the thick observation and changing the 'priority person' every five minutes was used. However, when there was an unusual event during the observation, the observation moved to the situation that unfolded and then returned to the 'priority person' observation technique thereafter. The observations included focusing on body language, tone, facial and eye movements and gestures. The detailed observations were conducted throughout the day with intervals of general observations. In between thick observations as described above, the researcher recorded other aspects of interest in the classroom space. Informal conversations that occurred between observations in the classroom were also recorded. Detailed notes were made of learners' movements in and out of the classroom; learner monitoring of other learners; teachers' comments and teaching styles as well as responses of learners. Notes were also taken about the learners' styles of dress and behaviour as well as their activities during and between lessons, as well as factors related to the use of classroom space, furniture and general comfort and discomfort in the classroom. The idea of the classroom as a private space within a school operating its own rules in the context of those which were laid down by the school and the Department of Basic Education was explored. Observations on the playground and during assemblies were recorded shortly after the activity to avoid attracting attention to myself by overt note taking. This was not an issue in the classroom as I was situated at the back where only a few learners and the teachers were aware of my note taking.

In the beginning, some teachers expressed discomfort about my constant note taking. I reassured them that my notes were predominantly about the learners. I admit, though, that in the classroom space I made many judgements about the teachers as well, as they were an integral part of the learners' experiences. The central focus of the study, however, was the learners and their experience of education.

2.4.2.1.2 Photographs using a SenseCam

I used a SenseCam to take photographs of the learners. The SenseCam automatically takes photographs of whatever is in front of the wearer. The SenseCam captures an average of 3-4 photographs per minute. According to Doherty and Smeaton (no date) the SenseCam incorporates a digital camera and multiple sensors including a 3-axis accelerometer to detect motion, a thermometer to detect ambient temperature, a passive infra-red sensor to detect the presence of a person and a light sensor. Sensor data is captured approximately every two seconds and stored in the camera (Byrne, Lavelle, Doherty, Jones, & Smeaton, no date). The fish eye camera lens makes the images different to that experienced by the wearer (Harper et al., 2008). When downloaded to a computer, the images are viewed using a rapid serial visualization tool so that an entire day can be reviewed in just ten minutes (Fleck & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The technology ensures that images captured are automatically segmented into discrete events making the analysis of the data more manageable.

The SenseCam it is claimed, “made participants see the mundane in new ways” (Harper et al., 2008, p. 274). Part of this study was to explore the mundane in everyday life; this device was an excellent asset. Furthermore, the SenseCam study showed that SenseCam images made strange empirical facts of bodily location. This technology has been enormously beneficial to the study in relation to the theoretical framework of space and time.

The intention was for the educator to wear the SenseCam right from the beginning of the study, while she/he was in contact with learners (both inside and outside of the classroom) in order to record their activities and experiences of schooling. However, difficulties in purchasing the SenseCam resulted in it only being used toward the end of the study for a period of two weeks. During that time educators entering the classroom wore the camera throughout their lessons. Between lessons the camera was returned to me and I continued wearing it, taking pictures from where I sat at the back of the classroom. During break and at Assembly I wore the SenseCam. I generally just walked around the playground but was also taken by two learners on a tour of the school. At assembly I sat on the side of the hall with some of the teachers.

The SenseCam produced approximately 5466 images in the two weeks that it was used. Whilst the SenseCam is valuable for a study such as this, one has to be aware of the potential difficulties

arising from the use of an unobtrusively-placed continuous camera. Many of the images were unusable as there was no way of controlling what was being taken. The camera automatically took pictures of whatever was in front of it. If a teacher remained seated at the desk the camera recorded the items on the desk or sometimes just the tablecloth as the camera, worn around the teacher's neck, dropped below the desk. In one instance the teacher's hair fell over the front of the camera during the lesson and the images were blocked. Sometimes only parts of images were visible making it difficult to discern what was in the image.

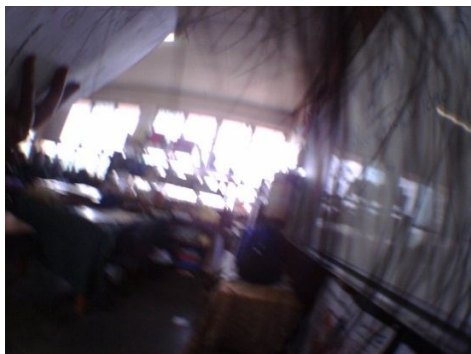


Figure 6: Image blocked by teacher's hair

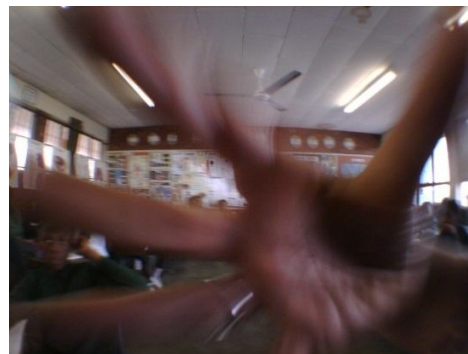


Figure 7: SenseCam takes a picture of someone's hand

The images could be viewed through the *Vicon Revue Programme* supplied with the camera. However, I found the programme tiresome to use and opted to view the pictures through the *Microsoft Office Picture Manager*. In the programme supplied with the camera, pictures could be viewed as a slide show and the show could be timed to create a mini video. I used that facility in my analysis to calculate the time in which teachers conducted lessons.

Teachers cooperated fully with wearing the camera. Some of them threatened the learners that their bad behaviour was being recorded and so they had better behave. I do not think learners took the warning seriously as they did not change their behaviour while teachers wore the camera. After the initial excitement when the camera was introduced, learners largely ignored the camera. In the beginning a few learners made faces at the camera when they thought it was pointing at them.

A study conducted by Harper, Randall, Smyth, Evans Heledd and Moore (2008) found that the traces that the SenseCam produced were not “analogues to their own memory” (p.

271). The photographs revealed a different perspective to that remembered by the participants. In this study the pictures were shown to the learners in different contexts to ascertain their interpretation of certain images. A detailed explanation is given below.

2.4.2.1.3 Preliminary Analysis

Some initial/preliminary analytical reconstructions were made after phase one to establish “interactive patterns, their meanings, power relations, roles, interactive sequences, evidence of embodied meaning, intersubjective structures...” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). Such analyses helped to prepare questions for the interviews and the questionnaire. However, Carspecken’s warning that “initial meaning construction should be viewed as very much preliminary and subject to error” (p. 96) proved correct. The preliminary analysis of both the photographs and field notes helped to select learner informants for the next phase of the research process.

2.4.2.2 Phase 2 – Generation of Dialogical Data

The second phase moved to including the research informants in the data collection. The intention was to conduct data collection through the following techniques: observation, interviews and interpretation by learners of the photographs from the SenseCam.

In this phase I selected ten learners who I monitored more closely for an extended period. The learners were selected on the basis of the observation in the classroom in the first phase as well as on the advice of the class teacher about their home situations. I chose five boys and five girls. Criteria for selection included poverty status extracted from school records (inability to pay school fees, unemployment of parents), the educator’s view of the child as being poor and outward signs of poverty (lack of stationery, condition of school uniform, no lunch, inability to pay petty fees, etc.). Some learners who were originally selected failed to get permission from their parents to be interviewed. Reasons for refusal were not investigated. A sixth boy from an adjacent class was also interviewed on the recommendation of the class teacher.

2.4.2.2.1 Observation

After the initial observation during the first phase, thick observations concentrated on the selected learners. The observer recorded verbatim the utterances of participants. Such utterances

were brought into the individual interviews for further explanations. The observation method outlined in Phase One was continued.

The field notes (used to record observational data) included real descriptions of what was observed, the processes and their contexts. The notes are both condensed (taken down during the observation) and expanded (recorded shortly after the observation to expand on condensed notes) (Spradley, 1979). The field notes include a record of the space (physical place), time (sequencing of events over a particular period), participants (the selected learners), the activity (what is being done at that particular time), the goal (the purpose of the activity), the environment (physical things present), and feelings (emotions expressed or observed) (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). The journal was used to record the personal experience of the ethnographer in the course of doing the research.

2.4.2.2.2 Interviews

Following the close observations I conducted recorded interviews. The eleven learners and two adult respondents were formally interviewed individually. The interviews were unstructured and were based on observation notes. Each respondent was interviewed for approximately one hour with the exception of two with whom I conducted follow up interviews to clarify some issues that arose during the first interviews.

All interviews were transcribed into text using *Dragon Naturally Speaking*, a programme which converts voice data, transcribed orally by the researcher, into written text. The transcriptions were checked for accuracy and corrected. The adults who were interviewed were given printed copies of their interviews; they did not make any corrections. The learners were not asked to ratify their interviews.

All of those who were interviewed gave written consent (see attached sample in Appendix 4). The learners also obtained written permission from their parents before they were interviewed.

2.4.2.2.3 The Questionnaire

Each learner in the class completed a questionnaire (see Appendix 6). The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish the personal details of individual learners in the class as well as

their attitudes and preferences in relation to their experiences of learning. The questionnaire also unpacked the activities they were involved in outside of the school space.

The questionnaire was given to the learners before they watched the *PowerPoint* presentation of the SenseCam photographs. The questionnaire was explained to them and they were told to respect one another's privacy so that each learner could complete the questions without interference from other learners. Most learners found a private space in the large audio-visual room to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed so that learners would not be disadvantaged by having to explain in their own words. Options were offered and they had to choose the most appropriate response. In cases where the suggested responses were not appropriate spaces were provided for a different response. I am aware that this approach has its critics. For instance, Rattray and Jones (2007) warn that there is an inherent assumption that "the researcher and respondents share underlying assumptions about language and interpret statement wording in a similar manner" (p. 235). During my time at the school I became aware of learners' poor writing skills and thought it best to provide some guidance so that learners could easily respond with minimum writing.

Learners' responses to the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 7. The questionnaire was analysed using *Microsoft Excel*. Each questionnaire was analysed individually giving a value of 1 to each response. The Excel sheet is a consolidation of all the responses of the learners.

The second half of the questionnaire related to the photographs and is explained hereafter.

2.4.2.2.4 The Photographs

The photographs were used both as data and as data generators. Since photographs are viewed as a record that embodies reality, a photograph acquires value as a document of an event as it happens. The meaning attached to the photograph is viewed as being either in the photograph itself or in the framework from which viewers draw meaning. It is in the viewing of the photograph that meaning is constructed and in this process multiple meanings are generated (Schwartz, 1989).

Schwartz (1989) views photographs as “inherently ambiguous” (p. 122) as multiple meanings emerge in the viewing process. Her interpretation that multiple meanings produce a rich source of data, as the meanings generated provide further opportunities for gathering data, provides direction for this study. In her view, photo elicitation enables the interviewer to create a comfortable environment in which interviewees relax, averting the strangeness of the interview situation. In her experience, interviewees became immersed in the photographs and at times appeared to be unaware of her presence as they responded directly to the photograph.

Learners gave written permission for their photographs to be used (see Appendix 5). All photographs in this thesis are covered with a black strip over the eyes to protect the identity of the individuals involved. The photographs were arranged into three categories for analysis: Places around the school; behaviour and moments. The photographs were arranged into *PowerPoint* presentations and each photograph was numbered. There were approximately fifty photographs in each category. Learners were each given a questionnaire and the process was explained to them.

The first category was about spaces and places around the school that included spaces directly outside the school. Places were selected from what learners and educators said in their interviews. Learners were given a questionnaire that required them to fill in a number on the photograph next to a statement. See Appendix 6 for the questionnaire. Below are the questions that were asked. The analysis of the responses can be seen in Appendix 7.

Places around my school

- a) Where I feel safe _____
- b) Where I feel nervous _____
- c) Where my language is spoken _____
- d) Where I never go _____
- e) Where we have fun _____
- f) Where some children get bullied _____
- g) Where fights happen _____
- h) Where kids push and shove _____
- i) Where there are secrets _____
- j) Where naughty things happen _____
- k) Where the cool kids hang out _____
- l) Where we gather in our groups _____
- m) Where I meet my friends _____

In the analysis of the responses, each learner's responses were analysed separately. A value of 1 or 0 was given to each response. The *Excel* sheet presented in Appendix 8 is a consolidation of all the responses of all the learners.

In the second category, learners were asked about the behaviour of those in the photographs to ascertain how they interpreted particular behaviours as well as their attitudes to particular individuals in the photographs. They wrote the number of the photograph next to each statement. Below are the behaviours that were listed. The analysis of the responses can be seen in Appendix 8. The analysis was done as explained above.

Behaviour

- n) Good behaviour _____
- o) Busy _____
- p) Bossy _____
- q) Not paying attention _____
- r) Helpful _____
- s) Naughty _____
- t) Frustrated _____
- u) Having fun _____
- v) Funny _____
- w) Bullying _____
- x) Silly _____
- y) Lonely _____
- z) Messing around _____
- aa) _____

In the third category learners were again shown numbered photographs presented on *PowerPoint* and asked to indicate whether the photograph elicited a good or a bad feeling. Below is a copy of the table they were given. The analysis of the responses can be seen in Appendix 8. The analysis was done as explained above.

MOMENTS: The picture gives me a

GOOD FEELING	BAD FEELING

2.4.2.3 Phase 3 - Unpacking System Relations and Networks across Time and Space

While at the school I became aware of school logs that were started in April 1904. I was given permission to look at the logs and found that they provided extensive historical evidence that is relevant for this study. It positions the school in space and time. The historical data provides information not only of the school's history but of the social context in which the school evolved.

The reading of the school logs excited me to the extent that I investigated the historical context of the time in greater detail and through the *National Archives of South Africa* (NASA) found voices that had been lost and not heard in the grand narrative of history. Those voices provided an immediacy that transcended the past, providing insight into the present. They provided context to decisions that had made sense at one time and are still enforced today although no one knows the reasons for them any longer.

This study explores everyday complexities of life across time and space, in which the school is situated as a network through which there could be numerous trajectories and translations depending on the perspective through which the network emerges. The school logs and archival evidence provide a time capsule to the past from which the present assumes a particular identity. By uncovering the history of the school I have been able to bring events and ideas from the past into the present. As Brown and Capdevila (1999) state, "... a fold in space and time, like a blunt scissors edge run across paper, such that what were distant points suddenly become neighbours" (p. 29).

2.4.2.4 Phase 4 - Explanation of Findings and Analysis of the Data

The findings of the study are discussed in the light of the social theories and concepts to be further elucidated in the next chapter. I have aimed to match the findings to relevant social theories, using both empirical and reconstructive techniques to bring to the fore the system relations and networks between the various parts of the study as well as the chosen theoretical framework (Carspecken, 1996, p. 206).

2.4.2.4.1 *Analysing Data*

In ethnography, data analysis is an on-going part of the research process. It starts with the pre-fieldwork phase and continues through up to the process of writing up the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). During the preliminary analysis of the data, I drew together and compared similar themes in order to explore cultural reconstructions and the physical environment in which the subjects learned and lived. Important themes that emerged in the initial analysis included:

- Disjuncture between learning and teaching
- Rhythms from the past – Christian ethos
- School life and home life: contradictions
- Learner behaviour and controls

These themes were used to design the questionnaire and structure for conducting individual interviews. In subsequent analysis networks were developed related to the rhythms of school life across time and space, day to day practices in the school environment, continuities and discontinuities related to historical phenomena.

2.4.2.1.1 *Analysing Ethnographic Interviews*

Interviews were analysed by identifying phenomena related to the research question and the theoretical framework. The data was divided into constituent parts followed by identification of the relationships between the parts and the whole. Spradley (1979) suggests that ethnographic analysis is “the search for the parts of a culture and their relationship as conceptualised by the informants” (p. 93). The ethnographer seeks to find out “what are the cultural meanings people are using to organise their behaviour and interpret their experiences?” (p. 93). The ethnographic analysis therefore has a purpose of uncovering the cultural meanings that the learners use.

2.4.2.1.2 *Networking Data*

Latour (2007a) suggests that it is important to localise the global by creating a flat area from which to analyse. The flatness discards the notion of hierarchy and enables the researcher to look at the *how* rather than the *what*. The claim is that through this process the social will become fluid and collectable. A narrow, focussed study (suggested by the process of localising the global) has the advantage of being able to hone in on the mundane that escapes the view of one who looks at the all-encompassing larger picture. Latour (2007a) asserts that as “the local sites

that manufacture the global structure are underlined” (p. 176) the local is no longer embedded in the macro and can be traced more vividly through the numerous networks created. The intention is to “*follow the arguments and criticisms of the actors*, instead of doubling them with our own operations of calling into question” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2000, p. 218).

I therefore set about finding networks revealed in the data. The data consists of the following: observation field notes; reflexive journal; transcripts of in-depth interviews with eleven learners and two adults; photographs; historical data gleaned from school logs from 1904 to 1966; historical data from archives in Pietermaritzburg and Durban; other spatial research into the area where the school is located and all other relevant research papers from related studies. The analysis includes linking the researcher’s observations, historical data, photographs and the voices of the interviewees. Other related research is used to compare findings in this study and enhance understanding.

Carspecken (1996) cautions that “we do not end up with a single reality but a field of reality claims consistently made by the participants” (p. 188). This study chooses to present those mundane experiences of the learners contextualised through their home, school and classroom experiences so that the participants explain their own reality. Data is presented in four chapters. Chapters Four, Five and Six are more descriptive with some analysis whereas Chapter Seven involves in-depth analysis of the networks that emerge across the preceding three chapters. Chapter Four, titled *Socio-Historical Spatial Contexts of Learners’ Lives*, focuses on the historical space out of which the school grows and highlights continuities and discontinuities with the present day experiences of the learners at *Good Hope School*. Chapter Five, titled *The Multiplied Contexts of School Life*, draws attention to the many facets of the school and learners’ complex relationships found in the historical data captured in the school logs, the philosophical and ideological context and between the people, places, objects and rules and regulations in the school space. Chapter Six, titled *The School Experiences of the Learners at Good Hope School*, looks closely at what the learners experienced in the classroom space; how they were positioned and how their everyday experiences related to their learning. The *Conclusion* (Chapter 8) draws together the findings, analysis and arguments presented in the thesis.

2.4.3 Ethical considerations

This research is guided by the ethical guidelines upheld by the *University of KwaZulu-Natal* and the code for the conduct of research. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (School of Education and Development) gave full approval for the research (Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0103/011D) (see Appendix 2). The KZN Department of Basic Education granted permission for the research (Reference 0016/2011) (see Appendix 1). The chairperson of the school's governing body signed the letter that provided written consent for the research and use of the SenseCam (see Appendix 3 for a copy of the letter that was signed). Participants in the research provided informed written consent for participation in the research project. In the case of minors, parents provided written consent (see Appendix 4). The identities of all participants in the research project have been concealed and names of participants and the school have been changed to protect the identities of the research subjects.

2.4.3.1 Ethical Issues pertinent to visual images

The issue of informed consent is of particular relevance where visual data of a personal or sensitive nature is produced (Boxall & Ralph, 2009). In view of the sensitivity related to the use of photographs, the ethics of taking public photographs needs to be explored.

Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) caution that “even though it may be *legal* to photograph someone in a public place, ... such action is *not* ethically neutral” (p. 563). In this study I have been mindful of the importance of respecting participants' privacy. A photographer wields the power to suggest meaning with regard to a particular photograph, possibly imbuing it with the photographer's views and values (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). For this study, all participants signed consent forms (Appendix 5) in which they agreed to their photographs being used. Faces in photographs have been partially blacked out to protect the identities of the individuals in the photographs.

Since the SenseCam takes photographs automatically, the wearer has control over when it switched on or off. Staff and learners involved in the study were advised as to how the SenseCam works and agreed for its use in the classroom and school. Only photographs for which permission has been received have been used in this document.

2.4.3.2 Ethical Issues Related to Researching with Children

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child endorses children as official players in their own lives, thereby giving value to children “as people in their own worlds” (Ebrahim & Muthukrishna, 2005, p. 82) and lending weight to the views of children. While children may be viewed as competent to participate in the research process, it remains incumbent upon the researcher to act as the protector of research participant who are minors, should issues of physical or emotional safety arise (Birbeck & Drummond, 2007). This principle was adhered to at all times during this study.

Birbeck and Drummond (2007) argue that it is impossible for an adult researcher to become invisible in a child’s world. Their presence is not only a physical one but raises expectations of appropriate intervention when needed. For example, if a fight broke out amongst a group of children it would be expected that if an adult was present he or she would intervene in the interests of the children’s safety. It could also be argued that a lack of intervention from an adult in such a situation would be considered unethical. A researcher can therefore only immerse herself in a child’s world to the extent that she becomes a familiar part of the child’s school environment. The researcher’s role is to ensure that children in the study feel “safe, supported and valued” (Birbeck & Drummond, 2007, p. 28).

In the South African context, children’s voices have historically and traditionally been marginalized and silenced. It is important that researchers pay attention to power imbalances between adults and children and use techniques that do not only rely only on verbal communication (van der Riet, Hough, & Killian, 2005). Children must be made to feel a sense of control over the research process. While it is acknowledged that children are competent participants in the research process, a researcher should recognize that they are “constrained by adult structures and practices in which they are located” (Morrow, 2008, p. 4). Morrow’s (2008, p. 13) cautionary advice that it is difficult to anticipate everything that can arise in the course of the research, was useful. As a result, I approached the research with a sense of responsibility and was able to respond in an ethically sound manner to the unexpected situations that arose.

Informed Consent Procedures

The KZN Department of Basic Education approved this study to be undertaken at *Good Hope School*. At the school, the governing body, principal and Grade Six educators were informed about the research before it commenced. Thereafter, the Grade Six educators that were directly involved in the study were provided with greater detail regarding their involvement in the research and the research process. The principal, chairperson of the governing body and relevant teachers signed detailed consent forms (Appendix 4).

The learners, as well as their parents or legal guardians, were informed of the nature of the research in writing in order to allow parents and guardians the opportunity to make an informed decision about whether or not to allow their children to participate in the research. Letters of informed consent (Appendix 4) were signed by all parents or guardians whose children were interviewed. The learner participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw should they so choose. Learner meetings were conducted individually to ensure that they fully understood to what they were consenting.

Confidentiality issues

Learners were apprised of the issues of confidentiality. A private venue was selected for interviews to ensure that other learners and educators driven by curiosity could not easily gain access.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the individuals who participated in the research.

2.4.4 Limitations of the Study

The following issues have limited this study:

- The focus of the study is on the particular school experiences of learners at a school that regards itself as poor and cannot assume to apply to other schools.
- Ethical considerations for taking photographs restrict what can be used in the study.
- I, as the researcher, was an outsider to the school selected for the research. I therefore did not have the fuller knowledge that would accrue to an insider.

- I was inexperienced in ethnographic methods of research

2.4.5 Validity

Creswell and Miller (2000) define validity as “how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them” (p. 124). They contend that there is a general consensus that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible. They assume that validity does not refer to the data but to the inferences drawn from them.

The following procedures were used to ensure validity:

2.4.5.1 Networking the Data

In view of the multi-layered data collection and analysis strategies of this study, networking provides a way to bring all the parts together and provide greater coherence. My aim was “finding and maintaining that balance between richness and diversity of perspective on one hand, and coherence, aesthetic appeal and clarity on the other” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 73). Networking, like crystallization, provides links that give greater clarity and depth to the variety of contexts and relationships.

Limitations of Networking:

Networking does, however, have a number of limitations, which include:

- Researchers need to have multiple skills in order to effectively navigate all the aspects related to the study.
- While ensuring depth of analysis the wider focus could be lost.
- It is not widely recognised as a viable methodological framework and can be perceived as contradictory and inconsistent.

2.4.5.2 Researcher Reflexivity

A daily journal was kept that captured my reflections on the research. A section on the role of the researcher is included in Chapter Three and Chapter Eight of this thesis. It is important to recognize the reflexive character of social research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) caution that reflexivity has “implications for the practice of social research” and advise that “rather than

engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about understanding them” (p. 17). The researcher, in their opinion, is an active participant in the research process (1993, p. 18). They therefore suggest that the theories developed to explain the behaviour of those being studied should also, where relevant, be applied to the researcher’s own activities (1993, p. 19).

2.4.5.3 Prolonged Observation in the Field

My extended stay at the school ensured that the data was more reliable because behaviour patterns could be traced and verified. The prolonged period of time ensured that the evidence was trustworthy. The data was checked and rechecked for reliability and consistency.

2.4.5.4 Thick, Rich Description

Descriptions that emerged fit the criteria for validity described under Phase One of the design. Providing vivid detail, as well as providing as much detail as possible when recording observations, increases the validity of the research.

2.5 Concluding Comments

The research journey has been a complex one that has not always moved as smoothly as was envisaged in the research proposal. I trust that I have appreciated the importance of being true to the voices of the participants and presented as accurate an account as possible of their experiences at *Good Hope School*. Every possible effort has been made to protect confidentiality and the identity of the school and the participants.

In the next chapter I explore the theories and concepts used in this study.

Chapter 3: Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

Young and Schuller (1988), in the introduction to *The Rhythms of Society*, state that “... if social scientists are interested in time they must be prepared to puzzle in new ways about the relationship of the present to the past” (p. 4). This chapter sets out how the research data unfolds through theoretical lenses. Important in the unfolding framework are the rhythms situated in time and space as the past merges with the present in unpredictable and complex ways.

In Chapter Two, I outlined the use of *ethnography* as a methodological foundation, supported by *actor network theory* as a toolkit, for this thesis. This chapter provides the essential ingredients that cement the thesis together. The framework is held together by theories and concepts related to the everyday. Investigations into theories and concepts rooted in the everyday take one on a journey that is not always in keeping with what one expects. I delve into viewpoints that have their genesis in Hegelian philosophy and trace the development to present day discourses on complexities of the everyday.

Since the study unravels the day-to-day texture of the school life of children, it positions itself in the physical, social, pedagogical and historical context of the school environment and investigates the daily lived experiences of the children. The conceptual framework for the study is set within a critical ethnographic approach and is supported by the theoretical concepts of space and time studied through the lenses of everyday life.

Firstly, I briefly explain my own position within the research. I then explain the multiperspectival approach used in this thesis. Thereafter, I set out theories related to understanding the everyday. Central to the argument is an understanding of alienation. To bring alienation into present day discourse, I unpack the normalisation of the everyday through an understanding of Foucault's philosophical arguments. I then explore theories related to time and space – an essential component in networking the everyday experiences of the learners in this study.

3.2 Positioning the Researcher

While much of what this study discusses is already known about schooling in the South African context, the journey I have undertaken is to move away from traditional thinking and to ponder everyday problems differently. Foucault put it another way. He felt compelled to write “in order to change myself and no longer to think the same thing as before” (1991c, p. 24).

In my own life experience, I have examined society from multiple perspectives. My perspective as an educator has been dominant. In the years since South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994 I have become increasingly aware of new positions that are being taken by different sectors within South African society. These include not only former pro-apartheid forces which have continued to resist change, but also the new ruling elite which continue to use race and their position as liberators to obfuscate their position as an exploitative ruling class. The exploited and those who are struggling for the most fundamental social services are, in turn, asserting new positions as they reject being spoken for or about and instead insist upon representing their own issues. They have popularised the slogans “nothing about us without us” and “when order means the silence of the poor then it is good to be out of order” (“Abahlali baseMjondolo,” 2013). This also predicates a notion that researchers cannot assume to speak on behalf of their research participants. Their interpretations are their own as they infuse their research with their own attitudes and values.

In the arena of education, I found that amongst learners I taught at a privileged school, poverty (in small numbers) affected children across racial groups. Parents lost jobs due to the economic downturn and found themselves pauperised almost immediately without a safety net and with nowhere to turn. The school had to deal with the social welfare of hungry children and find ways to assist those families. I realised then that the mundane realities of everyday discourse are important to understand if one wants to make a difference in the world. However, in that investigation there needs to be openness to new ideas and ways of investigating as truth telling lenses need to be exposed to harsh realities that do not always fit in neatly with existing positions and attitudes. Consequently, while my own views emerge throughout the thesis they are tempered by a determined attempt to unravel truthfully the experiences of the learners.

Boltanski (2011) asserts that since human beings are capable of reflexivity, they “are not content to act or react to the actions of others. They review their own actions or those of others in order to make judgements on them, often hinging on the issue of good and evil – that is, moral judgements” (p. 3). The researcher, then, cannot occupy a position of neutrality in the research process. Metaphysical constructs are inherently part of such judgements whether acknowledged or not. Boltanski thus exposes contradictions in the way critical theory operates. He coins the phrase ‘metacritique’ to encapsulate critical theories of domination that are socially rooted in theoretical constructions that aim to unmask oppression, exploitation and domination in whatever forms they occur. Research in this context is both descriptive and critical of the social order being investigated. The exteriority of the researcher is therefore complex.

This thesis is a critical ethnography. Boltanski’s views challenge the positioning of critical theorists. I believe that pragmatic theorists like Boltanski provide innovative lenses through which to view practices that are taken for granted. Such a challenge opens up new ways of thinking and viewing. However, it also means that the thesis has to strategically associate the often difficult and sometimes contrary voices. My intention is to use pragmatic theory without abandoning important critical positioning. While this path is not new to experienced researchers, it presents a challenge to an inexperienced researcher such as me.

In my readings, I have been inspired by the way Lefebvre understands and expounds on everyday discourse. Lefebvre (1991a) acknowledges Hegel for the phrase “the familiar is not necessarily the known” (p. 132) in order to develop the idea that “it is in the most familiar things that the unknown – not the mysterious – is at its richest, and that this rich content of life is still beyond our empty, darkling consciousness, inhabited as it is by imposters, and gorged with the forms of Pure Reason, with myths and their illusory poetry” (p. 132). Lefebvre captures the notion that it is in the everyday that persons enter a dialectical relationship with the external world and where desires, powers and futures are articulated and realised in a fully integrated cultural expression (Gardiner, 2004).

The notion of the everyday conjures up images of mundane routines developed over long periods of time. It goes to the heart of human existence as it investigates that which is taken for granted

and performed unquestioningly, habitually and automatically. This ethnographic investigation into the experiences of learners attempts to unravel these realities. The thesis articulates the day to day practices and experiences of the learners as they traverse the educational and social terrain.

In this thesis Lefebvre's ideas are supported by several other relevant critical and pragmatic theorists. Since this appears to be a contradiction, I start with a discussion of how critical theories can be used in a pragmatic framework through a multiperspectival approach.

3.3 Multiperspectival Study

This is a critical ethnographic study that is held together by complex theories. I use Bohman's (2004) terminology of a multiperspectival inquiry to frame the way the theory is used in the study. Bohman (2004) explains:

... a pragmatic interpretation of critical social inquiry is the best way to develop such practical knowledge in a distinctly critical or democratic manner. That is, the accent shifts from the epistemic superiority of the social scientist as expert to something based on the wider social distribution of relevant practical knowledge; the missing term for such a practical synthesis is what I call "multiperspectival theory."

Bohman (2004) refers to Dewey (1938) who realised that different types of problems required different modes of inquiry for their solution. He therefore concluded that knowledge could be practical in many different ways. He explored a way in which practical and critical social science could be applied in practical theory. For that project he developed a pragmatic conception of *critical theory* as a social theory of practical knowledge. Important to this thesis is his understanding that "a proper theory must capture the ways in which the same complex social process can be experienced in different and even conflicting ways from many different social perspectives" (p. 123). A multiperspectival view provides a framework within which the different impacts can be interpreted.

Carspecken (2002), in a similar vein to Bohman, uses Willis' reformulation of praxis theory in *Learning to Labour* to address the postmodernism versus criticalism debate. Through the concept of "cultural production" Carspecken (2002) says Willis provided "a nonreified way to think

about social structure, preserving an emphasis on human agency and the cultural conditions within which agency always takes place” (p. 60).

Celikates (2006), too, contests the notion that the whole critical project stands in contradiction to what has been called the ‘interpretive’ or ‘pragmatic turn’ in social theory and philosophy. He argues for a two-fold claim:

Although the interpretive and pragmatic turn is right in criticizing the idea of a break between the objective standpoint of critique and the deluded perspective of the agents, it does not follow that we have to abandon the project of a critique of ideology.

The way I interpret Celikates’ understanding is that the status of the social critique undergoes important change as the theoretical basis of the critique is reconstructed through agents who, while engaged in the social practices, constantly interpret, make and remake the normative distinctions and theorems of existing theories. I therefore adapt Celikates’ thesis and suggest that only a social theory that takes on the critical capacities of the agents themselves can present a viable framework within which to think through the complexities of the everyday.

3.3.1 A Critical Response to the Pragmatic Gaze

Boltanski (2011) extricates two kinds of critical operations: simple exteriority and complex exteriority. Simple exteriority relates to description of the internal activities of the social actors. In order to produce this, the social scientist tracks and pronounces what the actors are doing and how they evaluate their actions. Complex exteriority uncovers domination (invisible to social actors) through theoretical critique of the social order. Boltanski’s chief criticism of the metacritique of domination, according to Gonzalez and Kaufman (2012, p. 77), is that it (metacritique) produces a totalizing point of view on reality.

Gonzalez and Kaufman (2012, p. 56) suggest that *pragmatic sociology* is one of the most hopeful sociological schools that merges the structural organization of the worlds of action with an emphasis on human agency and the formation of meaning in situation. Importantly, the pragmatic view rejects the theoretical standpoints that place the sociologists’ view over that of the social actor. Gonzalez and Kaufman (2012) maintain that the legacy of pragmatism (as provided by Dewey) can be reconciled with critical inquiry. They accuse Boltanski’s approach of harbouring a fatal weakness of a “conceptual dualism between society and social order and

thereby between pragmatics and semantics (that) tends to bypass plural grammars of actions and self-qualifications of agents to better shed light on the deep, one-dimensional, transversal meta-grammar that pits dominant elite against dominated people” (p. 61) and propose “another pathway to social critique by taking more seriously the pragmatic assumption according to which the *action and its consequences* - and neither the agent nor the historical, social, or economical context - must be the unit of inquiry” (p. 62). They use Jeanne Favret-Saada’s work on contemporary witchcraft, and Michel de Certeau’s study on 17th Century possessions to show how this can be done. With regard to Favret-Saada’s study, they show that the individuals do not rehearse learned scripts or actions and they present the way things appear to them in varied ways. They argue that de Certeau’s analysis shows how grammar and phenomenology, social order and the individuals’ experience are complexly intertwined.

Gonzalez and Kaufman (2012) propose a continuum between internal viewpoints about an action and more external viewpoints, instead of opposing a simple exteriority with a complex one. In their proposal, they say, “Such a continuum is a feature of the phenomenon itself, which is *always* open to both internal and external gazes and, by way of consequence, to a plurality of perceptions - a plurality that is thus intrinsic to the whole phenomenon” (p. 77).

Carspecken (2002) interprets Foucault’s position with regard to gazes “as the product of ‘strategies’ pursued by ‘anonymous power’ rather than through the work of people who knowingly or unknowingly construct views to favour their own social position and interests” (p. 69). Whether gazers or ‘gazees’, people are themselves fashioned by the same tactic of power that led Foucault to declare the ‘death of the subject’ and death of humanistic theories and philosophies. Carspecken (2002) argues that through this formulation, Foucault “places power outside the subject and inside or equal to knowledge” (p. 69).

Celikates (2006) suggests that what the actors believe, and their everyday experience, should be interrogated to distinguish between “appearance and essence” (p. 26). He contends that there are differences between what normal people are able to see and what the social scientist is positioned to see. The social scientist’s positioning enables her to unmask what is behind the surface of ordinary deception. Celikates (2006) chooses the theoretical standpoints developed by Boltanski,

Thévenot and Chiapello for having the dual structure best suited to perform practices and “shift between different regimes of action and different repertoires of critique and justification” (p. 31). Celikates (2006) recognises the shortcomings in metacritical theories of domination but does not reject more radical approaches in certain instances that are justified. What he considers important is that the practice of critique “starts with the critical capacities of agents themselves” (p. 35). In this reformulation of the practice of critique, there is no privileging of an epistemic position nor a break with ordinary practices of justification.

Celikates (2012) cautions that the ‘pragmatic turn’ proposed by Boltanski and others should not lead to an abandonment of the project of critical theory. He contends that the insightful abilities of ‘ordinary’ actors and their practices of justification and critique establish the social and methodological basis of critical theory. However, he warns that “this should not lead us to attribute an epistemic authority to the perspective of the participants which is immune to being put into question from a theoretically informed point of view” (p. 161).

Latour (2004) maintains that the intention “was never to get away from facts but closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism” (p. 231). This thesis accepts the sociology of critique as formulated by Celikates and through the maxim popularised by Latour ‘to follow the actors themselves’:

On the level of ‘pragmatics’, it analyses actual practices of critique and justification. On the level of ‘grammar’, it analyses the rules and conditions to which actors must adhere if they are to successfully partake of these practices. On the level of ‘topic’, it analyses the repertoires of argumentation and modes of speaking employed by actors in different social contexts (Celikates, 2012).

An ethnography is well suited to follow the actors and record as many points of views as possible. Such a study recognises the range of views and the pluralistic conceptions found in those views. By using a multiperspectival approach this ethnographic study is able to acknowledge and scrutinize diverse and critical perspectives on the part of both research participants and social scientists while embracing a pragmatic interpretation.

De Certeau (1984) in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* captures the intent of the study:

Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the "geometrical" or "geographical" space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions.

3.4 Theorising the Everyday

3.4.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the everyday experiences of learners. It is therefore crucial to have a clear understanding of the everyday. There are complex meanings attached to the everyday which are explored in the writings of Dilthey, Wittgenstein, Simmel, Husserl, Schutz, Heidegger, Dewey, Lefebvre, Kosik, Bakhtin, Benjamin, Bloch, Habermas, Garfinkel, Debord and de Certeau, among others (Sandywell, 2004). Given such a large body of literature, a single definition of the everyday could be difficult. This thesis regards the everyday as that which relates to the commonplace, ordinary and mundane in the rhythms of life from day to day; related to the known and accepted rituals associated with common-sense knowledge (Sandywell, 2004). It also, however, remains mindful of the complexities related to the simple question, “Whose everyday life?” Important in the study of everyday life is the uncovering of that which is hidden by dominant versions of social life (Highmore, 2002b, pp. 1-2).

Philosophers in the 17th and 18th centuries regarded the everyday as lacking in reflective thinking and being immersed in ordinariness that needed to be escaped from if individuals wanted to become enlightened human beings. In the 19th century ordinariness came to be contrasted with ‘revolutionary’ and “everydayness as *commonality*” was “reconceptualized as *mass experience*” (Sandywell, 2004, p. 164). In more modern times the everyday is associated with images of eroded community, colonization and domination. A devalued person is perceived as captured into institutionalised controls through the sharing of common understanding.

Definitions of the everyday appear to suggest one reality in a homogenised experience of the everyday. This thesis submits that there is plurality and multiplicity in everyday experiences that constantly adapt to prevailing conditions. While steeped in historical discourse, the daily drudgery of ordinary people’s lives is made up of complex combinations of survival strategies.

3.4.2 Understanding the Everyday through Lefebvre

In Lefebvre’s (2002) monumental exploration of what is meant by everyday life, *Critique of Everyday Life*, he defines the everyday as:

... the space in which dialectical movement advances or comes to a halt, in an unpredictable blend of opaqueness and transparency, of clear-sightedness and blindness, of determinability and transience (p. 10).

His understanding of the intricate interrelationship of everyday life and society is seen through a radical critique of the one by the other and vice versa. He holds that the principle of double determination is essential to dialectic thought, explaining:

In one sense there is nothing more simple and more obvious than everyday life. How do people live? The question may be difficult to answer, but that does not make it any less clear. In another sense nothing could be more superficial: it is banality, triviality, *repetitiveness* (his emphasis). And in yet another sense nothing could be more profound. It is existence and the 'lived', revealed as they are before speculative thought has transcribed them: what must be changed and what is the hardest of all to change. (2002, p. 47)

Lefebvre (2002) considers everyday life on different levels of social reality. He contends that while ordinary working people are immersed in everyday life, upper class people are able to artificially remove themselves from the everyday through the pursuit of pleasure. Ordinary people exist on the lower echelons of cyclic time scales where time and space are limited while in the upper spheres of linear time scales time and space "grow larger and wider" (p. 53). Lefebvre refers to the people in the lower sphere as "unaware and powerless" (p. 54). He says that their immersion in time robs them of the ability to understand time. Time is taken up in eking out a living that is governed by cycles. He explains aspects of the cycles:

Every day, every week, the same places, the same aims, the same itineraries. People have very few 'relationships' or 'know' few people outside this space. They are anonymous within their own lives (which explain the passionate interest in the trivial news item, that poor man's tragedy in which destiny is revealed, symbols are reconstituted and anonymity is overcome in an effort to reach the great light of the social day). This suffocating state of affairs has its compensations: the vitality and direct, immediate character of the 'lived', a sort of irrefutable concreteness (2002, pp. 54-55).

Lefebvre (2002) contends that in the lower levels people and relationships "gravitate around symbols" while at the upper level "people move and act amid formal and conventional abstractions, or more precisely, amid signs and signals" (p. 53). In the upper sphere he sees people as abstracted from "the vitality and spontaneity of symbols" (p. 54). Those in the upper sphere experience more adventure, openness and play but, he argues that they lose themselves in abstraction, inauthenticity and pointless sophistication. In order that the everyday does not fall into the realm of illusory "false consciousness" (p. 58), Lefebvre grounds his theory in "uneven development" (p. 55).

Marx's overarching theory of uneven development explains the continuing sectors and geographical areas rise and others decline, but in a manner that does not achieve equilibrium, as free market economists would assume, but instead continually polarises (Bond, 2000, p. 5; Marx, 1946, p. 668).

In Lefebvre's view, "in uneven development the everyday defines itself in what *lags behind* (his emphasis) history, events, development and human power" (p. 58).

Lefebvre opens his first volume of *Critique of Everyday Life* with an explanation as to why he chose to study the everyday. He explains Lenin's understanding of Marxism as situated firstly in the everyday and laments the fact that Lenin did not pursue this idea further. He says, "The fact remains that the *Critique of Everyday Life* was built entirely around a concept which Lenin had left aside or neglected, the concept of *alienation*" (Lefebvre, 2008, p. 3). In the third volume of the series he explains that "from the outset, the critique of everyday life imparted content to alienation, but did not define its status..." (Lefebvre, 2005, p. 17).

Lefebvre (2002) is convinced of the absolute importance of the legitimacy of the critical study of everyday life but cautions that "there is no preordained highway along which to travel" (p. 4) and such a study must "blaze its own trail between philosophical reflections and fragmented and specialized research" (p. 5).

In view of these contested notions of everyday discourse I have considered other views of the everyday.

3.4.3 Other Views of the Everyday

Sandywell (2004) claims that the everyday remains an essentially contested concept and proposes alternative ways of thinking beyond the limitations imposed by traditional social theory. His proposal contends that the grammar of everyday life suggests homogeneity but "ordinariness opens the way for a more radical politics of experience" (p. 175). His proposal is for the recovery of the duality of the everyday as the centre of social experience as well as the intricate source for transforming the world.

Silverstone (2002) argues that there are deep seated moral and ethical issues to be confronted through the mediation of everyday life. He explains that the lived and the represented become the woven threads of the everyday, and any investigation of their interrelationship creates an

interwoven fabric of the historical and sociological that represents its strengths and weaknesses as well as its coincidences and contradictions.

Gardiner (2004) defends the relevance of Lefebvre's work. He puts forward the two opposing views as, on the one hand, the critical dialectic that is an overtly political project to investigate alienations at the heart of capitalism and includes the liberatory nature of the everyday and, on the other hand, the more academic approach which endeavours to better understand the lived experience of the everyday.

Gardiner (2004) asserts that many of Lefebvre's critics have misunderstood him because, having failed to read the entire body of his work, they have not grasped the full spectrum of his argument, which validates the notions they attempt to dispute. Lefebvre's interest, he contends, was to dialectically expose the contradictions and ambiguities of everyday existence. The defamiliarisation process suggested by Lefebvre serves to articulate the everyday through a unity with critique to enhance its richness (Gardiner, 2004). Gardiner concludes: "...critique as Lefebvre understands it is about opening ourselves up to multiple possibilities, in order to embrace a myriad of alternative ways of thinking and living" (p. 247).

3.4.4 Alienation

Alienation is considered to be a legacy of the Marxist/Hegelian critique of domination. According to Fischer (1976) alienation is "the state in which the actor fails to perceive an interdependence (mutual control) between himself and social relationships or other objectifications" (p. 43). He sees objectifications as those physical, social, and cultural realities which are generally human externalizations. Carspecken (2002) interprets Willis' standard for resolving whether alienation exists or not, and to what extent, as the degree to which actors had charge over their self-expression within their own milieu. Alternatively, Carspecken (2002) theorises alienation as "a state of affairs occurring when one or more dimension of action is under the control of other people and/or institutions" (p. 66). Since action is multidimensional, Carspecken argues that human responses to alienation include the growth of cultures that stress those dimensions still under the actor's direction.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1954) provides insight into individual consciousness and how that consciousness is developed through interaction with others. He considers self-consciousness as being duplicated both within and outside of the self. The other self is determined by external forces that cause the individual to suspend inner self consciousness.

Sinnerbrink (2007) explains the complexity of Hegel's "dialectic reversals" (p. 19). He interprets the master/slave dialectic as a quest to unravel conceptions of freedom. In his understanding, he says Hegel argues that it is only through acknowledgement from another person that we gain a truer sense of the self. In the life and death struggle for the attainment of consciousness, one of the protagonists must relent and submit to the will of the other. In that battle the vanquished becomes the dependent and the victor the independent master. However, the victory is hollow and the master remains dependent on the slave who lives to satisfy the master's desires. The conclusion reached is that the slave will achieve a more real concept of freedom and develop "a sense of self-identity through work and contribution to the social community" (Sinnerbrink, 2007, p. 19). In his creation of this contradiction, Hegel ensnares both the master and slave in a fateful relationship of domination in which neither attain true humanity and freedom. Thus Hegel arrives at what he calls the "unhappy consciousness" (Sinnerbrink, 2007, p. 20). For the alienated subjects (master and slave) it is an "inadequate conception of freedom" (p. 20). The alienated subject struggles against metaphysical and temporal contradictions within the self and cannot reconcile until "it realises that it cannot forcibly unify the universal aspect of its selfhood with its particular body experience" (p. 20).

Wilding (2010, p. 26) interprets Hegel's construction as an understanding of humanity's relation to and alienation from the natural world as rooted in human inequality and alienation from one another. Through a critique of Latour, Wilding (2010) develops the claim that while human action bridges the gap between humans and nature, it must be recognised that alienation from nature develops along with the refinement of those actions. Important in Wilding's (2010) interpretation is how subject and object have become "sedimented and actualized in history" (p. 27).

The metaphysical approach assumes a philosophical argument that further estranges alienated subjects in idealistic philosophical debate. Lefebvre (2008) considers Hegel's reversals and

concludes that: “Hegel explained contradiction by alienation, while Marx explains alienation by dialectical contradiction” (p. 70). The dialectical underpinning is important to seeing alienation from multiple perspectives.

Latour rejects any obvious link with Hegelian ideas and attempts to develop a different way in which to express his thoughts. While Wilding (2010) challenges Latour’s premises and claims that precedents for Latour’s ideas are already evident in the arguments of Schelling (Hegel’s contemporary) who had been challenged by Hegel, Latour provides interesting insight into constraints evident in traditional ways of thinking about alienation. In their criticism of alienation, Latour and Stark (1999) maintain that it is not about the opposition to attachment or detachment but rather the kind or quality of the attachment. For these two theorists it is not about the subject or the forces that cause the subject’s alienation but rather, it is about things themselves and the claims of being able to distinguish good from evil. They assert that while being liberated from one attachment, individuals become bound to another.

Philosophers who predate the Marxist period, such as Hegelians, consider alienation from the individual perspective while philosophers who ground their thinking in Marxism align alienation to its social context. An alternate viewpoint proposed by Boltanski (2011) counters the metacritical view of alienation but recognises that while metacritical theories and descriptive social science are “in part incompatible”, they are “profoundly interdependent” (p. 16).

Boltanski (2011) recognises a common humanity and asks why actors accept the factual existence of inequalities that are difficult to justify. By an adaptation of the Marxist notion of alienation Boltanski says critical sociologists interpret the illusionary nature of internalised belief systems as kept in place by dominant ideologies. The main criticism Boltanski holds is that critical sociology distances itself from actors in their lived experience of everyday life. By contrast, the pragmatic sociology of critique acknowledges that actors have the critical capacity and creativity to engage in and interpret their own reality.

This thesis recognises that the individual cannot be removed from the social context. However, individuals do sometimes act from an egotistical position. It is important to consider alienation

when it restricts freedom and the ability to act independently. This thesis is mindful of Latour and Stark's (1999) advice:

When eulogizing liberty, the progressives forget to specify, for those newly freed of their "bad" ties, the nature of the new ties with which they would henceforth be made to exist, the better beings from whom they would now alienate themselves. In speaking of liberty as an asymmetric term designating only the chains of the past without referring to the bonds of the future, the progressives commit an error as flagrant as that of their ostensive opponents.

3.4.4.1 Religious Orientation

Religious beliefs are fundamental to the way the respondents in this study define their own reality. Philosophers contend that religion can be both an alienating and liberating force. Conflicting views from early philosophers like Hegel and Feuerbach provide interesting insights into views of religious alienation. Feuerbach (1966, pp. 36-37) calls Hegelian philosophy "reversed idealism" and explains that theology transforms the aims of man into aims of the divine by depriving them of their own purpose. He conceives of man as imagining himself and projecting himself as another being thereby alienating himself from his true self. According to Vogel (Feuerbach, 1966, pp. xlv-xlvi), Hegel overcomes alienation through "transcending the limitation of space and time" while Feuerbach reduces man to his temporal reality fully occupying space and time.

Latour (2010, p. 50) makes a radical shift from the philosophical religious arguments presented above and suggests that instead of comparing theories one should compare practices. In a review of Latour's book *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, Carlson (2011) asserts that Latour claims that religion is about the "renewal of the attachments to the mundane rather than beliefs" (p. 246). According to Asad (2011, p. 12), Latour's intention was to understand how enlightenment critique operated in a colonial context. Latour craftily shows the constructedness of idols by revealing how the 'modern' westerners mocked the idols of the Africans while venerating their own fetish in the Virgin Mary. The hypocrisy exposed in the duplicities is important for appreciating "the establishment of the Other as Inferior" (Asad, 2011, p. 15). However, Latour's real intent according to Asad is to challenge the power that is concealed in the critique. Latour tries to show that de-alienation is not necessarily a consequence of being liberated from a fetish since the 'liberator' is also bound into factishes that are created "to nourish the very anti-fetishist polemic whence we are trying to extirpate ourselves" (Latour,

2010, p. 35). Latour shows invisibilities produced through abstraction (Kleinman, 2011). His understanding captures the contradictoriness in dominant western ideologies.

This thesis strives to present the sense of being in the world as explained by the research participants. Understanding both the critical philosophical contexts and the pragmatic approach is important for a multiperspectival method. Religion is therefore explored through the way it has been practised in the school space and the way it is used and has been used for purposes of moral teaching. The contested philosophical arguments that explain how religious belief systems serve the purpose of enslaving and alienating are tempered by the understanding that ordinary people are viewed within their own social realities and the way they interpret that reality. Lefebvre (2008) supports this notion and says that alienation should be seen in “its dialectical profundity” (pp. 71-72). Rather than the researcher taking the stance of the knower, I believe that the research data should be grounded in the social realities and revealed in its sometimes contradictory complexity. Lefebvre’s (2008) advice is to think through the concept of alienation dialectically both as it is determined “in all the breadth of its universality” and “in the minutiae of everyday life” (p. 76).

The philosophical arguments articulated serve to not only express the difficulties encountered by philosophers themselves but also to bring the concept of alienation into the arena of education in an understandable way.

3.4.5 Normalisation

It is my contention that normalisation inflicts alienation on those outside of that perceived norm. Norms have historical contexts that are obscured. Everyday understanding of why we perform certain rituals in the way we do are hidden behind clichés like ‘it has always been this way’. In the context of school life those everyday acts are so normalised through centuries of ritualised actions that perceptions operate within certain normalised practices. Foucault’s insight into how those perceptions and understanding come to be are important for linking alienation and what is perceived as abnormal.

3.4.5.1 Control through Normalisation

Foucault uses a genealogical methodology to trace the construction of discourses of power relations. Delanty (2011) argues that Foucault's critical method is genealogical because:

... it aims to show how the modern self was constituted in relations of power; it is deconstructive in that it seeks to reveal that knowledge is not emancipatory, but heavily implicated in the shaping of social institutions in modern society (pp. 81-82).

Foucault (2003) focuses on how the power of normalisation has evolved historically to “extend sovereignty” (p. 26) over the whole society. He traces the development of juridico-political theory of power and concludes that “the jurido-political theory of power centered on the notion of the will and its alienation, transfer, and representation in a governmental apparatus” (p. 49). In his analysis of power Foucault does not see it as “essentially a negative mechanism of repression” (p. 50), but rather as complex relations held in place by rational techniques that are integrated by coercion-technologies and self-technologies. While the technologies are interrelated, Foucault takes greatest cognizance of the technologies of domination and the self. Technologies of domination reflect Foucault's earlier work and technologies of the self his later work. His interest is in how individuals act upon themselves in interrelationships in everyday life. Important in the technologies is the system of education. The Foucauldian perspective expresses the view that education plays a role in stripping the individual of autonomy which is counter to the popular view that says education serves to create autonomous individuals (Marshall, 1997). Evidence in this thesis supports the Foucauldian view.

In an introduction to *Was ist Aufklärung?* Kant (2007) wrote:

... Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction, nevertheless remains under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book that understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay – others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.

He argues that only when people are able to release themselves from this self-imposed tutelage can they attain enlightenment. Foucault (2007) critiques Kant's ideas as “rather ambiguous” (p. 100) because Kant describes it both as a phenomenon (collective ongoing process) and as a duty (or an act of personal courage). While he neither accepts nor rejects Kant's philosophising on enlightenment, he recognizes the importance of the moment in which Kant reflects. He suggests

that the importance is to recognise through self-analysis that human beings are historically determined in some ways by the Enlightenment (Foucault, 2007, p. 110). This thesis posits that human beings easily accept controls and direction.

Foucault coined the term governmentality. Pike (2008) explains Foucault's use of the term as follows:

His use of the term indicates a departure from traditional definitions of government as the exclusive concern of the state, to include the myriad of techniques and practices through which individuals are 'made subjects'. ... Therefore, governmentality is interested in the techniques through which particular regimes of government seek to shape the actions of individuals and populations and correspondingly how individuals govern their own and other's behaviour together with a concern for the underpinning rationalities that normalise these practices. Central to this notion is the idea that subjects are constituted through discourse and act upon themselves and each other drawing on various governmental technologies through which they conduct their own conduct.

Gordon (1991), in an introduction to Foucault's lectures on governmentality, explains "the conduct of the conduct" as "a form of activity to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons" (p. 2). Inda (2005) reiterates similar sentiments saying that 'government' in Foucault's work generally refers to the conduct of the conduct which are "all those more or less calculated and systematic ways of thinking and acting that aim to shape, regulate, or manage the comportment of others, whether these be workers in a factory, inmates in a prison, wards in a mental hospital, the inhabitants of a territory, or the members of a population" (p. 1).

Foucault (1991b) defines the art of government as "the art of exercising power in the form and according to the model of the economy" (p. 92). Foucault's historical analysis leads him to characterise government in western societies as "a form of political sovereignty which would be a government of all and each, and whose concerns would be at once to 'totalize' and to 'individualize'" (C. Gordon, 1991, p. 3).

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1991a) highlights how the control of people emerges in the Classical Age:

A meticulous observation of detail, and at the same time a political awareness of the small things, for the control and use of men, emerge through the Classical Age bearing with them a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge descriptions, plans and data. And from such trifles no doubt the man of modern humanism was born (p. 141).

Through his study of disciplinary controls, Foucault has been able to show how modern societies can be understood by a reconstruction of certain “techniques of power” or of “power/knowledge” which he suggests are designed to “observe, monitor, shape and control the behaviour of individuals situated within a range of social and economic institutions such as the school, the factory and the prison” (C. Gordon, 1991, pp. 3-4).

Foucault is more concerned with changes in the practices of government and less with institutions of the state. This view is captured by Gros (2011) who says that Foucault examines, “What modes of subjectivation are articulated with forms of the government of men, either in order to resist them or to inhabit them?” (p. 350). In other words, instead of analysing the apparatus of the institutions of the state, Foucault concentrates on “the mechanisms (dispositifs)⁶ that have sapped the strength of these institutions and surreptitiously reorganised the functioning of power: ‘miniscule’ technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributing a discursive space in order to make it the means of generalised ‘discipline’ (surveillance)” (de Certeau, 1980, p. 66). Institutions like schools use repression and “silent technologies” (de Certeau, 1980, p. 66) to maintain the established order. While Foucault focuses on particular institutions, his concern is how power, specifically micro power, orchestrates daily life. As Highmore (2002a) points out, for Foucault power is found in “the repetitive practices that both produce and instil a sense of disciplinary self” (p. 10).

Foucault (1991a) explores positions on power in his work *Discipline and Punish*. It is in this work that he expounds on the power of the norm that “appears through the disciplines” (p. 184). Through standardisation practices, normalisation became one of the great instruments of power. Later he links discipline to regulatory power - perceived as complementary to each other by

⁶ When asked what he meant by the term dispositive Foucault replied: What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.... Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements (Highmore, 2002a, pp. 10-11).

Collier (2009). He explains: “They are two dimensions of a general process of normalization that operates to extract, mobilize, optimize, control and possess biological life” (p. 85).

Normalisation is the technique used to effectively control the populace by legitimising the basis through which power is exercised. It is not about excluding or rejecting but rather about a positive technique of intervention and transformation. Unlike the Hegelian point of view or the common notions inherited from the historical reality of slave and caste society, Foucault does not see power as a mechanism of repression or as linked to the effects of ignorance. The power of normalisation functions through common understanding rooted in transformation and innovation (Foucault, 2003, p. 52).

In his final year of public lectures in 1984, Foucault delivered a series of lectures titled *The Courage of Truth*. In his analysis of those lectures Gros (2011) says that Foucault wanted to emphasize that the hallmark of the true is otherness:

...that which makes a difference in the world and in people’s opinions, that which forces one to transform one’s mode of being, that whose difference opens up the perspective of an other world to be constructed, to be imagined. The philosopher thus becomes someone who, through the courage of his truth-telling, makes the lightning flash of an otherness vibrate through his life and speech (p. 356).

Through highlighting the policing strategies across the ages, Foucault has drawn attention to the scrutiny that social subjects undergo through the control of social spaces by invading governing bodies and institutions. Participation in that governance and policing is no longer the preserve of governments and institutions of government but occurs through the willing adherence and obedience of the general populace. Those who do not comply are noted and subjected to further scrutiny. The philosopher-researcher requires unique truth-telling lenses to unravel the many contradictions in everyday life. Through the ethnographic lenses of this thesis, the micro systems and mechanisms at play in a classroom and school environment are scrutinised across space and time.

In everyday life people are not critical all the time. Rather, people generally conform and adhere to common practices in the way they conduct daily life. Institutions create that common understanding through the conventions established in society around which it organises itself. Common understanding and approval of conventions enable society to police itself in the way it conducts everyday life. When conventions become established norms they develop into

institutions around which the society organises itself. The institution is established as a legitimate social grouping (Douglas, 1986).

Institutions like schools regulate disciplinary control by demanding individuals' participation in their own subjugation (Gore, 1997). The control is over teachers and learners alike. It is the common forms of disciplinary control and the understanding of what is truth that give schooling a consistent character in keeping with the ideological perspectives of the country and the world. Through normalisation practices schools become sites of the actualisation of power relations. Gore (1997) explains:

A number of specific practices involved in the functioning of power relations – namely, surveillance, normalisation, exclusion... Foucault emphasised the functioning of time and space in actualising power relations with knowledge, and the exercise of power in relation to oneself.

3.4.5.2 The 'Abnormal' and the 'New Normal'

Ruddick (2006) proposes a concept of the 'new normal' to explain a changed interpretation of what is perceived as normal. The term was first used by students at Columbine High School in the USA to describe their perceived reality after the massacre at their school in 1999. Ruddick views that which is seen as arranged in the child's best interest as new disciplinary technologies to transform modern systems of education and discipline. In her view the 'new normal' restructures norms and forms of childhood socialisation. The 'new normal' signals a shifting attitude towards juvenile criminality more evident in the USA but increasingly, according to Ruddick, being taken up in other Anglo American countries. The past adherence to policies that stipulated a child's lack of culpability due to developing brain function is beginning to lose ground.

Evidence in this thesis suggests that there are practices in the lives of the school that are perceived as fitting into the context of what is defined as the 'new normal'. A respondent in this thesis uses the term 'new normal' to define what she perceives as deviant but which appears to be acceptable to the broader community who have changed accepted moral practices. The term is largely used as a social commentary on the way society has shifted its moral lenses to accept that which was previously defined as immoral.

The view of children as mini adults is relevant for this thesis. That view alienates children further from previous roles of being in the process of becoming. The child as mini adult has greater responsibilities and fewer opportunities to just be a child. It is important to acknowledge how alienating practices are viewed as 'new' through normalised views of what are deemed to be acceptable practices. The advocates of the 'new normal' do not interrogate the understanding of what has come to be accepted as normal. Important to this thesis is the way society responds and returns to former practices perceived as better controlling mechanisms when faced with extremely difficult problems related to changing circumstances of childhood.

3.5 Linking Foucauldian Ideas

Contested views of alienation, earlier referred to as a legacy of the Marxist/Hegelian critique of domination, suggest that society is being controlled by powerful forces that seek to ensure their on-going legitimacy through everyday practices that are normalised and accepted. The interpretation that everyday practices are self-regulated, and so normalised that they are conducted without interrogation or understanding of the power wielded by powerful forces, has been challenged by many theorists. An earlier reference to slogans used by social movements suggests that the powerlessness attributed to those at the bottom rung of society requires different interpretations. A reconceptualised approach understands the more "subtle, ambiguous and situation specific form of domination that refuses the propaganda model's assumption that people are passive, easily manipulated victims" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 93).

Carspecken (2002) says that Willis situates power within the human subject. He suggests that circumstances of action ascertain social relations of power through their connection to human agency. In his opinion, Willis' reformulation addresses the criticalism versus postmodern problematic because of the epistemological implications.

Society is structured in such a way that hierarchies of power are defined both overtly and covertly. In a school the hierarchical arrangements ensure that the children have the lowest place in the hierarchy. Amongst the children themselves there are further hierarchies that are determined through inter alia gender, class and nationality. In this section, my interest is in what is perceived as "a movement from the Hegelian-Marxist approach towards interpretative

conceptions of critique, leading to a pluralisation of critique and a shift from macro to micro analysis” (Delanty, 2011, p. 68).

Larsen (2011) claims that hierarchies in the western world are not what they used to be. Democratic processes have become such that where hierarchies exist those above are accountable to those below and those at the top no longer have the power that they had in the past. New hierarchies are constantly formed but operate differently to hierarchies of the past and are under constant scrutiny for possible abuse of power. In the education arena this has meant that while teachers hold hierarchical positions over their learners, their teaching is under scrutiny by both learners and parents. They are no longer the only voice of knowledge. Learners are the centre of the learning process, making them the new subjects of power. This, Larsen asserts, is an anti-authoritarian shift in perspective that signals a transformation in the hierarchy of power. The transformation in these relationships requires a shift in the way sociologists critique hierarchy and power. In essence, Larsen (2011) argues that “hierarchy is replaced by flexible, but also more subtle forms of control, while the individual citizen or the employee is deprived of the security previously guaranteed by the very same hierarchy” (p. 39).

Larsen (2011) develops his ideas through a comparative study of Foucault with Boltanski and Chiapello. Important to understanding his thesis is an understanding of the critique as being *in* society rather than *of* society. Larsen (2011) explains:

Instead of critiques from a completely external point, critiques of society should be understood as part of their own object and therefore they have to reconcile with the condition of self-reference (p. 41).

Success in resistance establishes new power hierarchies and relationships. Larsen (2011) asserts in defence of the notion of the plasticity of power, “All power relations are in principle open to tactical displacements” (p. 43).

Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) analyse new ways in which capitalism survives by examining how ideas for greater delineation of power are absorbed into the capitalist forms of management. In a comparative analysis of Boltanski and Chiapello’s work with that of Foucault, Larsen (2011) points out that “a new, critical idea about conduct is adopted not necessarily because it is understood as being good or legitimate in a normative sense, but simply because it ‘works’” (p. 47).

Foucault understands power as “not the possession of some people who wield it over others, dominating and constraining them”, but as “relational and productive” (Fox, 2000, p. 858). By combining a Foucauldian approach with actor network theory, power relations can be examined both from within situated activity as well as from the bottom upwards and outwards (Fox, 2000). This provides the possibility of multiple contexts that emerge from the data itself. The interest is in how any actor comes to be, and function as, an actor (Fox, 2000). Foucault (no date) explains power as being everywhere. He explains that it is “not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 93). In essence the power is in the actions of the actors as well as the inanimate actants (Fox, 2000). As Fox (2000) explains: “struggle is many-faceted involving the self acting upon itself, as well as upon others and upon the material world” (p. 860).

Foucault uses the tool of bio-power to explain how nation states regulate citizens through techniques of subjugation in order to control the population. This revelation has contributed towards a form of counter-politics that challenges power relations. It is in this context that Foucault perceives power as strategically reversible. Consequently it is now understood that “for power relations to exist the freedom of agents must be presupposed” (Marshall, 1997, p. 596).

In order to understand the normative views of people, Boltanski and Thévenot (2000) construct a model called *the orders of worth* that builds a bridge between the social sciences and moral philosophy. They act on the premise that social science approaches “ignore the concern for the good that persons are moved by, and ignore the question of what is just, leaving that to the conscientious attention of researchers” (2000, p. 208). Crucial to their model is a move away from traditional Marxist analysis situated in relations of power. Different orders of worth acknowledge a common humanity. They agree the relations of power cannot be ignored but maintain that their aim is “to show that in certain situations justifiable and universalizable agreements are possible, and that these are capable of resisting their denunciation as simple power relations under the veil of relations of justice” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2000, p. 212). They are interested in the pragmatic framework which “seeks to classify ideas rather than analyse their involvement in processes of change” (Larsen, 2011, p. 45).

In a review of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Turner (2007) suggests that Boltanski, Thévenot, Chiapello and others “seek to reinvent a post-Marxist critical theory in which a sociological critique of society engages with the great variety of public debates which also challenge social institutions, and which as a result demand some justification of power” (p. 411). They argue that there is a limit to the impact of alienation and exploitation since justification exerts constraints on capitalism.

3.5.1 Towards a Pragmatic Alternative

Exploitation implies there is some form of domination. Metacritical theories of domination assume that the exploited are unaware of the exploitation they are subjected to and even of the social conditions that are at the root of the exploitation. Yet, there is evidence that human beings who become conscious of their alienation rebel and sometimes overthrow the dominants. Boltanski (2011) recognises that a metacritical position leads analysis to turn towards sociologies of action, which “acknowledge the intentionality of actors, their capacities for realizing (in the dual sense of conceiving and achieving) their true interests and desires, for fashioning new interpretations of reality and placing them in the service of a critical activity” (p. 15).

Boltanski (2011) is sceptical of Bourdieu’s *critical sociology of domination*. While acknowledging that Bourdieu’s critical sociology is “unquestionably the most audacious enterprise ever attempted to try to conjoin in the same theoretical construction highly constraining requirements supervising sociological practice and radically critical positions,” he says Bourdieu’s sociology is “both the instrument for describing domination and the instrument for emancipation from domination” (pp. 18-19). He proposes instead a *pragmatic sociology of critique*. This was established in the 1980s by social scientists (some of whom had originally embraced Bourdieu’s paradigm) who sought an alternative that did not put the social scientist on a pedestal as an ‘enlightened’ one as opposed to ordinary people who were seen as uncritical beings mired in illusion and unaware that they were being dominated. The assumption that social scientists knew more about the people they investigated than the people knew about themselves was distasteful to this group of social scientists. Following extensive research, Boltanski (2011) concludes that domination is not endured passively or unconsciously but is instead a space in which a multiplicity of disputes, critiques, disagreements and agreements are always fragile.

The ‘critical pragmatists’ have sought to re-tilt “from a critical orientation to the search for a better description” set in the context of social reality (Boltanski, 2011, p. 23). Their intention has been to improve description that more accurately presents the positions held by the actors in the research project and move away from a style that gives all the power of interpretation to the researcher. In this new orientation they have felt it is important to retain the critical aspect of research so as not to fall into the trap of conservatism.

This study finds agreement with the critical pragmatists in their search for an improved description. The search is for truth and reality in the data. These are complex concepts that require further discussion.

3.5.2 Sense of Truth and Reality

Over the centuries the complexities inherent in the relationship between truth and reality have led to greater and more complex formulations.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) recognise that claims to truth are always “discursively situated and implicated in relations of power” (p. 118). They suggest that truth is internally related to meaning in a pragmatic way through “normative referenced claims, intersubjective reference claims, subjective referenced claims and the way we deictically ground or anchor meaning in our daily lives” (p. 118).

In the previous chapter Carspecken’s (1996) emphasis on the nature of validity rather than truth was discussed. While truth depends on agreement, validity is not only about the logic of the argument but includes the assumptions of the argument. Carspecken therefore suggests that whenever there is a truth claim, the validity conditions associated with it should be examined (p. 57).

Boltanski (2011) is concerned that uncertainty threatens the “fragility of reality” (p. 54). He points to ambiguity that is evident in the uncertainty and unease which come to the fore in incidences of dispute. He recognises an overestimation in the importance attributed to the common sense (seen as generally shared self-evident truths) evidently internalised by each individual actor. He says that that is what motivated *On Justification* in which they established a

pluralist framework to account for agreement and dispute; acquiescence and critiques as well as the speedy shifts that occur between the two.

Boltanski (2011) prefers to consider the power exercised by the world over reality as stemming from continuous changes perceived in what he calls “the flux of life” (p. 58). The descriptions of the world by ordinary people reflect the common sense, normative reality maintained through institutions. Each human being is positioned differently and develops a point of view related to that positioning and daily existence.

By rooting critique in reality, researchers working with Boltanski (2011) attempt to revive critique by:

Abandonment of paradigms stressing the vertical dimension and the opacity of the alienated consciousness of agents, in favour of paradigms directed instead towards horizontal relations (in particular, analyses in terms of networks) and modalities of action interpreted in terms of strategic motivations and rational choices.

Delanty (2011) suggests that the objective of social science as a form of critique is to “demonstrate that beyond the empirical and the actual is the objective reality of the real” (p. 76). It has been previously stated in this thesis that there could be layers of reality dependent on the perceptions of individuals involved. Delanty (2011) supports this notion as it has the “capacity to demonstrate the web of relations that make up social reality in all its complexity” (p. 77).

In everyday life ordinary people establish a basis from which they make judgements. Their sense of reality is rooted in their sense of the environment in which they compare themselves, or their situations, to those around them. Weiss (1980) acknowledges this basis as a referent in which truth is rooted. Boltanski (2011) through a research project with ordinary people establishes what he calls a *grammar of normality*. He is able to reveal the important role played by the *ordinary sense of normality* in the judgements facing people in everyday life. Boltanski sees the sense of normality as a manifestation of a sense of reality.

3.5.3 Pity and Compassion

An understanding of a *sense of normality* is very important in the analysis of the everyday. In this thesis a sense of normality prevails in the lives of the actors in the school arena. I explore an

understanding of pity and compassion that I believe is part of the *grammar of normality* and is critical to appreciating some of the choices that personnel at the school make. Pity and compassion are concepts associated with poverty. These concepts cannot be avoided in an analysis of poverty or poor communities. The reality of poverty is beset by a *sense of normality* related to everyday experiences. Boltanski (2011) sets out to make the realities of ordinary people visible and intelligible by unmasking concealed powers and revealing “a reality whose correctness is as one with justice” (p. 113). In the exploration of suffering, the established reality of pity and compassion is confronted.

Generally, pity of the suffering poor is manifested by those who do not experience the same form of suffering. A distance is created between the fortunate and the unfortunate sufferers. The distance could be real or assumed. In the first instance there is a real physical separation of the fortunate and the unfortunate so that they remain out of each other’s space. In the second instance the distance is because the fortunate chooses not to see the suffering of the unfortunate and creates a mental boundary that keeps the unfortunate out of the immediate reality. However, this does not presume that all those who are fortunate completely ignore the plight of those less fortunate. Through charitable contributions the fortunate are able to alleviate their own discomfort related to the suffering of the poor or the unfortunate. However, there are also those who can ignore the suffering of the unfortunate and feel no moral obligation to intervene in any way. Like me (the reporter), the readers of this thesis become distant spectators of the suffering of the poor learners whose narratives open their suffering to our gaze. Depending on positioning, we adopt a stance of either feeling collective responsibility as citizens (perhaps benefitting from the suffering of others) or we avert our gaze and therefore feel no responsibility towards the suffering we read about (Boltanski, 1999).

Schools in South Africa have traditionally been moral guardians of those in their care. One of the means through which they teach morality is by instilling in children a sense of responsibility towards those less fortunate. The school uses a common theological understanding of compassion based on concepts such as ‘we are all God’s children’ to create an equality that makes each responsible for the other. The less fortunate are perceived as persons separate from the immediate reality of the more fortunate. Children easily feel sympathy towards and show

compassion to that which they perceive as suffering. They also withdraw sympathy if they judge the person to be feigning in order to gain sympathy (Nussbaum, 2003).

Those who are able to distance themselves from moral responsibility towards the unfortunate may use the causal argument that those responsible for the affliction of the less fortunate are responsible for the alleviation of that affliction. In this instance poverty is perceived as someone's fault and responsibility. Not everybody responds to the plight of the poor. Those who do, have a sense of compassion towards the suffering poor. Response to the plight of suffering also happens through intermediaries and is not always direct. In this thesis intermediaries play a crucial role that also serves to alleviate the distant suffering of the reader as the evidence of direct response becomes known.

Whitebrook (2002) sees compassion as referring to "the practice of acting on the feeling of pity" (p. 529). Pity is therefore the emotive response and compassion the action related to the feeling of pity. In this context pity and compassion include an element of equality and a sense of 'suffering with' rather than applying 'power over' (p. 529). In addition Whitebrook (2002) sees compassion as applying to vulnerable groups rather than suffering.

Kimball (2004) defines pity as "an intense sympathetic sorrow" (p. 302) at another's misfortune. He sees pity as different to compassion because pity implies a feeling of superiority on the part of the one who pities and includes an element of contempt for the object of the pity. Pity is different from compassion in that pity is more passive than compassion; pity includes an element of psychological distancing from the sufferer and may include an element of revulsion for the pitied (Kimball, 2004). In short he says "pity is a kind of spectator sorrow" (Kimball, 2004, p. 306). Alternatively compassion is selfless and includes "a loss of self in compassionate action" that is more about thinking of others rather than the self (Kimball, 2004, p. 304). Kimball acknowledges that pity is appropriate when there is no hope as in the case of imminent death or when a tragic outcome is inevitable.

Nussbaum (2003) defines compassion as "an emotion directed at another person's suffering or lack of well-being" (p. 14). A precondition for compassion is that the situation must be of a

serious nature. Nussbaum further articulates judgements that have bearing on compassion. Compassion is withdrawn if the sufferer is considered undeserving, as in the case of criminals. However if the criminals are perceived to be caught up in circumstances beyond their control, there may be a compassionate response. Poor people who are perceived as lazy are also considered as undeserving of compassion. If the suffering of the individual is perceived as suffering that the spectator could well fall prey to, compassion is felt. According to Nussbaum compassion is capable of polarising the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’ camps and has the possibility of going quite wrong if incorrect judgements are made. The camps defined as “non-us” are “threatening the safety of the ‘us,’ implicitly bad, deserving of any misfortune that might strike them” (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 17).

Jonas (2012) provides different insight into pity and compassion. Using the terms interchangeably, Jonas contends that it is important for learners to experience some level of suffering. He says that while teachers, through a compassionate spirit, try to alleviate their learners’ suffering they are unaware that “certain kinds of suffering actually enhance student learning” (p. 45). This thinking is taken from Mintz (2012) who uses Rousseau’s argument to explain the importance of an education in suffering. He explains:

... learning can and should be pleasurable and painless —... It is this theme in progressive educational thought that has given rise to the widely held belief that frustration, confusion, distress, and other painful moments in education inhibit learning (p. 249).

Rousseau (1964) uses the argument that it is important for children to develop courage and “not be alarmed by slight pains” (p. 88). He maintains that the most important thing for us to learn is “how to suffer” (p. 88). Mintz (2012) explains Rousseau’s philosophy in the education of Emile:

First, and most importantly, he must learn to bear the arbitrary blows of nature and endure the inevitable turmoil associated with social attachments. Second, Emile suffers because it is instrumentally useful in facilitating learning. Third, Emile must experience compassion, which involves suffering at the suffering of another, because compassion provides a positive and stable foundation for social relations (p. 255).

The contention is clear. Children learn compassion by experiencing physical and mental suffering. This should not be confused with a learner’s grappling with his/her learning.

In this thesis an appreciation of pity and compassion is important because it is not only evident in the responses of teachers and learners but it is also the basis through which the school serves its educational mandate.

3.6 Theorising Time and Space

3.6.1 Theorising Time

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, theorising time is an essential part of understanding the normalisation of the everyday. Time has evolved so that it is no longer perceivable, as time has been “apprehended within space” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 95) and is only perceived through measuring instruments such as clocks. I agree with Young and Schuller (1988) and my interest in time is associated with the mystery it evokes as well as the unity that emerges “between the static and dynamic” (p. 5) that both persist and disappear. The static is the societal structure that emerges through the continuities and the dynamic is change that is brought about by the discontinuities.

Time (like space) is seen as a social construct (Young & Schuller, 1988). In the everyday construct of western time, it is so normalised that we are unable to perceive of time not associated with a calendar or a clock. Reflecting on this helps us to go further than time measured by clocks into emerging patterns and changes. For, as Durkheim (2001) says, “time is not merely a partial or total commemoration of our past life; it is an abstract and impersonal framework that encompasses not only our individual existence but that of humanity” (p. 12).

Cyclic time is the everyday institutionalized time governed by clocks and watches that impose “monotonous repetitions” (Lefebvre & Regulier, 2003, p. 191). Everyday life is controlled by the regularity and predictability of cyclic time. Times to eat, times to work, times to sleep are all done at approximately the same time but separately. The repetition in the movement of time creates rhythm. The rhythm signals continuity.

Lefebvre (2002, pp. 47-50) looks at time scales from the cyclic and linear perspective. According to Lefebvre, cyclic time scales by their nature have no beginning or end and are repetitive. They relate to the cosmic rhythms of life – from birth to death. However, the cycles do not reproduce

themselves exactly and do not return to their place of departure, forming a kind of spiral rather than a geometric circle. They are linked to myths, magic and religious interpretations. Modern people's detachment and control of time displaces cyclic time with linear time. Alongside linear time, cyclic time scales continue to operate albeit as subordinate to linear time and fragmented. Birchall (1988) suggests that linear time is familiar and "conceived as the line extending into the future along which social change is measured" while cyclical time is conceived "as a set of recurrences which extend back into the past and preserve social continuity" (p. 175).

There are differing concepts of time dependent on one's class and social positioning. For instance in capitalist society the organisation of time is for economic profit. Bosses try to lengthen time while workers try to shorten the working day. The saying 'time is money' is an indication of the quantification of time and its organisation on economic terms by those in positions of power (Gurvitch, 1964, p. 96). Capitalism has made time a commodity and "the regulation, and exploitation, of labour time is central to the economic development of the capitalist system" (Starkey, 1988, p. 98). In the words of Karl Marx:

Therefore, we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcass (Marx, 2011; Pagano, 2007).

It is at school that children are introduced to the time controls on which work time will depend. Adherence to time rules is internalised by children during the process of socialisation at school (Starkey, 1988). This study reaffirms the importance of time controls in daily life and further shows the confluence of historical influence into the present.

3.6.2 Theorising Space

This study explores space from multiple dimensions to include historical, geographical, social, political and philosophical perspectives. Lefebvre brings together ideas from philosophers, geographers and everyday understanding as he theorises space in his book *The Production of Space* (1991b). He provides a unique network through art, literature, architecture and economics as he uses both metaphysical and ideological tools to explore the meaning of space. What is important to this study is to find new ways of understanding the space of the school identified in this study. Making meaning of, and finding changes in, the cultural and pedagogic life of a

school requires a creative process that will unravel the practices produced in the everyday life of the school. It involves seeking new ways of understanding within the context of school life. This does not mean that this is a search for the indefinable true self but rather an investigation of how learners see themselves and reproduce themselves within the ever changing - yet consistent - environment of the school, the community and society at large.

There are interrelationships between innumerable social spaces globally. Lefebvre (1991b) constructs laws that govern social spaces: the intertwining of social space; and “the worldwide does not abolish the local” (p. 86). These interrelationships are evident, for example, in worldwide networks of communication; local, regional, national and international markets as well as exchange of goods and finance on a global scale. In Lefebvre’s (1991b) view, “Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another” (p. 86).

The principle of the interpenetration and superimposition of social spaces is important to this study because it releases the expectation of a host of possibilities for unpacking fragments of space that reveal myriads of social relationships for analysis. The search is for “real knowledge of the production of space” and the rediscovery of “time in and through space” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 91). The emphasis is on the analysis of space itself “with a view to uncovering the social relations embedded in it” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 89). It is very important to note that “from the dialectical viewpoint these qualities are different moments of the same unity” (Merrifield, 1993, p. 522). As Merrifield (1993) explains:

The dialectical standpoint opposes the reification of fragmentation and the separation of different aspects of reality. Instead, its epistemological and ontological commitment affirms the unity of knowledge and the total character of reality (p. 519).

Lefebvre (1991b) emphasises that “places of social space are very different from those of natural space” and are not simply juxtaposed but “may even sometimes be interlocuted, combined, superimposed” and “may sometimes even collide” (p. 88).

Brenner (1999) recognises how space reproduces and reconfigures itself and suggests the transcendence of state-centric epistemologies in order to capture a better global perspective. Harvey (1990) concurs that the concepts of space and time are socially constructed. He suggests that at the root of the social construction lies the mode of production and its characteristic social

relations that are aided by technological change and rapid economic growth and development. He maintains that as societies change and grow they not only adapt to influences from without but also transform from within in order to accommodate practices that reflect new concepts of space and time. This thesis investigates such emerging understandings of space and time.

Hentschel (2013) represents one such emerging understanding of space. She calls segregation Durban's 'ghost' and examines taken for granted spatial ordering that has emerged as new class segregation which has replaced racial segregation. She argues that the agency of space should be taken seriously as in spite of efforts to overcome segregation, "apartheid urbanism has left a spatial morphology that cannot be undone overnight" (p. 198). She investigates the deeper notions of space evident in "apartheid nostalgia" (p.199) that haunts the social realm of the new.

3.6.3 Time-Space Compression

The study of the everyday through its situation in time and space allows the researcher to explore the rhythms created in the historical capsule of time situated in space. Marx (1993, p. 539) refers to the annihilation of space by time, creating what has been called a "time-space compression" (Massey, 1994). This compression is recognised in our use of the term 'global village' that encapsulates the common belief that global space has shrunk and the world as we know it has become smaller.

Time-space compression creates a sense of alienation and dislocation as globalised norms set trends and create authenticities in the identity construction of individuals and communities. In addition, globalised norms make assumptions and judgements tainted by colonial and westernised value systems. The resultant alienation and dislocation are seen in both continuities and discontinuities in the rhythms of the time-space continuum.

At *Good Hope School* many layers exist in the spatial context of the school. It exists in the global village that is the world and the events elsewhere, such as wars and the resultant influx of refugees, affect the school. Not only has present day electronic technology such as the internet and the world-wide-web shrunk the world but even a century ago this school, as part of a British colonial outpost, directly bridged the geographical and cultural gap between continents.

Presently, this school's learner population is a microcosm of the African continent, rich in cultural diversity.

While the principal of *Good Hope School* may longingly remember the heyday of the school when, in hindsight, problems were fewer and progress was good, the newer members of staff look critically at the school's problematic apartheid past in which 'white' people were favoured. The parents, previously excluded by apartheid legislation, who now live near the school, are pleased with their relocation into an area formerly the preserve of 'white' people. Somewhere in the contradictory layers of memory and experience is the meeting of minds. One such instance is the lament at the increasing crime that plagues everyone, regardless of race. The school is bound by its open admissions policy to provide education to all the children, even those whose parents are known criminals. These are but small indications of the complexities that exist in the school environment and the need to look at the school in terms of a network of layers situated in time and space.

It is not just the sense of space and place that is highlighted but also the sense of identity that underwrites the individual's experience of space. Experience of space is closely related to how an individual's identity is constructed and who they are. Race, class and gender (amongst others) determine how one experiences a sense of space and place. Societal inequalities in the global arena mean that our sense of who we are develops within the spaces where we exist which are determined by globalised norms. Individuals experience their spatial contexts in very different ways that are very intricate.

Massey (1994) explains the complexities related to how "mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power". Of three defined groups, she sees the first group as those who are jetsetters and trendsetters. They are the ones in control of the technological space sending and receiving faxes, emails, holding video conferences across the globe, controlling the media and newsrooms and most importantly controlling international finance. She says:

These are the groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases.

The second group Massey refers to are refugees and migrant workers. They do a lot of moving but are not in charge of the process. Their movements, a consequence of economic and social

hardships, result in “a confusing plurality of cultures” (Massey, 1994, p. 3). They are on the receiving end of the time-space compression as they are at the mercy of immigration officials and governments.

The third group Massey refers to are people like pensioners who live on the margins of society. She describes the complexities:

The pensioner in a bed-sit in any inner city in this country, eating British working-class-style fish and chips from a Chinese take-away, watching a US film on a Japanese television; and not daring to go out after dark.

However, Massey warns that the influence of one section of society over the other is not one-directional but moves both ways. She cites the example of people who live in the favelas⁷ of Rio who not only know the game of football in great detail but have also produced some outstanding international players. While few have ever been to downtown Rio, they have also contributed massively to the world of music and dance that is reproduced in the nightclubs of Paris and London. It is her view that “at one level they have been tremendous contributors to what we call time-space compression; and at another level they are imprisoned in it” (Massey, 1994, p. 4).

Massey suggests that in order to understand time-space compression the globe needs to be viewed as if from a distance in outer space. From this view it is possible to imagine:

... not just all the physical movement, nor even all the often invisible communications, but also and especially all the social relations, all the links between people. Fill it in with all those different experiences of time-space compression. For what is happening is that the geography of social relations is changing. In many cases such relations are increasingly stretched out over space. Economic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international (Massey, 1994).

The boundless arena of space and time thus created is seemingly endless as numerous layers, links and points of convergence and divergence generate greater proximity as well as distance. Conflicts arise from those meeting points. The conflicts are situated in historical, local, global, individual and communal contexts, creating unique moments in which differentiated

⁷ Shanty towns in Brazil.

understanding and unique relationships emerge. According to Harvey (1990) time space compression “forces all of us to adjust our notions of space and time” (p. 426).

3.6.4 Complexities of Time and Space

While I have tried to theorise time and space separately, it is “impossible to disentangle space from time” (Harvey, 2008, p. 273). Harvey refuses to choose whether space is absolute, relative or relational and suggests that each context defines the space. He finds the dialectical tension created by the three concepts important for continuously rethinking the interplay between the concepts. While absolute space-time is clear and easy to analyse, relative space-time is more difficult and relational space-time creates opportunities for unravelling complexities.

In this study I construct the complexities of the historical and present day convergence of space and time. Space and time change as the objective and material conditions change. When colonial explorers decided to settle in South Africa they forever changed the trajectory of space and time in the geographical spaces they occupied. Each significant historical moment impacts on both internal and external forces and transforms society.

An important aspect of this study is an understanding of the sense of space and place. Place is used in everyday language to express a sense of belonging. It is used in the sense of social space that expresses a sense of identity and shows established social hierarchies. It highlights relationships and creates the sense (perhaps superficially) of common meaning within a particular arena. Place is understood as confined to a particular limited area whereas space appears unlimited and infinite. Place creates the illusion of groundedness and belonging.

The view that times and spaces unfold in complex intertwining networks is supported by Murdoch (1998). He says, “There is no one time or space, rather there are a number of co-existing space-times” (p.360). It is my view that social spaces conceal social relations. It is commonly thought, for instance, that schools are homogeneous spaces that provide education. However, this study shows that schools are by no means homogeneous spaces and within the school walls are numerous networks that create complex social relationships that extend beyond the confines of the school situated in time and space.

In this thesis the idea of *laminations* is used to make visible hidden realities in the learners' schooling experience. Holland and Leander (2004) build on the term 'laminations' used by Leander (2002a) to explain how multiple experiences situated in time and space are layered into an individual's identity. History is therefore conceived differently as past and present experiences are intertwined in a multi-layered construct of time-spaces. This thesis builds on this understanding of laminations to understand the multiplicated contexts of learners' schooling experiences.

The idea of lamination fits in with Latour's explanation of networks (the laminations) that incorporate both human and non-human actors. Over time the threads of the social, the cultural and the personal layers become thoroughly intertwined (Holland & Leander, 2004). Through the processes and contexts a new persona emerges enriched with or entrapped by the particular schooling experience.

3.7 Concluding Comments

In this thesis, actor network theory (ANT) is the chosen toolkit for unpacking multiplicated contexts. Latour (1996) reasserts the spirit of ANT as aiming at "accounting for the very essence of societies and natures"(p. 369). He confirms that "it does not wish to add social networks to social theory but to rebuild social theory out of networks" (p. 369). I therefore merge the theories discussed thus far into a network of ideas that coalesce and support one another from their varied perspectives. Fox (2000) similarly links community of practice theory with Foucault's perspectives on regimes of discourse and actor network theory. Most important is the prioritization of data over theory, so that data is networked to enhance, contradict or even create new theory. Foucault is the master of weaving complex links to create clear genealogical patterns that explain complex realities in the present day.

In the following chapter I start from the historical, social, subjective and local realities of the children being studied to build networks across space and time. The connections established through the networks gain prominence through the number of ways in which connections emerge and are not hierarchical or ordered in terms of the micro/macro scales. The actors themselves set

the tone and direct the research. The geographical definition of space is undermined as spatial dimensions assume different relationships as there are only networking links with no surface as such. Spatial metaphors such as close and far, up and down, local and global, inside and outside lose their power over the research and are replaced by associations and connections (Latour, 1996).

Chapter 4: Socio-Historical Spatial Contexts of Learners' Lives

4.1 Introduction

A school exists within the historical, cultural and social space of the community it serves. The commonly perceived identity of the community defines how the school is perceived within that space, as well as from outside the broadly demarcated borders of that space. I adopt the argument used by Hentschel (2013) that essential to understanding the present is the recognition that “the dominant critical narrative is embedded in a particular spatial history” (p. 195). This chapter, therefore, firstly reflects on that spatial history. Secondly, it focuses on the present realities of the area as explained by academic scholars but foregrounded by the views of the participants in this study.

4.2 Why is the past relevant to the present?

Durban's history is a history steeped in divisions. The radical shift in the political dispensation after 1994 brought about important changes in the spatial divisions in the city. The changes signalled a new hope for better times when social divisions would disappear and the possibility to reimagine a future based on equity and openness emerged. The present reality of the marginalised poor shows little evidence of that glorious hope. The learners who attend *Good Hope School* are trapped in what Hentschel (2011) describes as “badly designed spaces” (p. 149). Spaces that border the school are designed for the use of the wealthy and privileged members of society. The learners live in the surrounding once-beautiful, now poverty ridden and unsavoury spaces that are a blight to the more upmarket surroundings. Rather than finding alternatives to a history of enforced segregation and inequality, the present authorities perpetuate practices which contribute to the degradation of recently de-segregated areas.

The search into the past helps to explain how normalised practices that continue to be used were established. In the present milieu “segregation no longer materializes itself solely in walls and control posts, but has become sophisticated: soft, small-scale, aestheticized, driven by consumption and sensation” (Hentschel, 2013a, p. 196). I therefore use historical context to make visible issues of normalisation and governmentality discussed in the previous chapter.

I briefly trace the colonial history of Durban that signalled the greatest upheavals in the lives of the inhabitants and brought radical changes to the way life was lived. Contrary to popular belief, segregation did not start in 1948 when the Nationalist Party came to power and introduced laws which entrenched the ideology of apartheid. Instead, there is evidence of the roots of segregation in the British and Afrikaner colonial history of the 19th century. Snippets of everyday life in Durban in the past provide context to the alienation which is prevalent in present day discourse. In the words of Hentschel (2013), “A critique of segregation needs to delve into the nitty-gritty of small-scale ordering and address the variety of social sorting in the city” (p. 200). My intention is to use the past to magnify the roots of segregation and set a tone for a better understanding of the complexities in urban space in the specific area around *Good Hope School* in Durban.

4.2.1 Historical Setting of Natal – Roots of Alterity and Alienation

Before Europeans arrived in Natal, Zulu society had already developed from semi-feudalism to commercial activity (Jaffe, 1988). When Europeans, led by Vasco de Gama, first arrived in Natal on Christmas Day in 1497 they found that Natal was “very fruitful and populous. The people used metallic ores and knew the art of smelting them⁸” (Jaffe, 1988, p. 90). They also produced “milk dishes, pillows, ladles... a kaross industry was also established” (Jaffe, 1988, p. 90)⁹.

Over the years Natal was visited by Dutch, English and Portuguese explorers. According to Holden (1855) the area was at first mostly visited by crews of vessels wrecked along the coast. He provided the following report from those early explorers:

‘One may travel two or three hundred *mylen* through the country, without any cause of fear from men.... Neither need one be in any apprehension about meat and drink, as they have in every village, or *kraal*, a house of entertainment for travellers, where these are not only lodged, but fed also...’

This report indicates a largely hospitable relationship between the newly arrived and the local inhabitants. The rich economic potential attracted Europeans to settle in Natal. Reports indicate that over the years a convivial relationship developed between newly arrived settlers and the

⁸ Simon van der Stel Despatch to Ch 17th April 1687 in (Jaffe, 1988)

⁹ HF Fynn’s Diary (compiled by J. Stuart and D.M. Malcolm, 1950) p. 229 in (Jaffe, 1988)

natives. But, by the 19th century, what Holden called “English lords” had amassed a following of several thousand disillusioned indigenous tribesmen whom they trained as soldiers. The settlers adopted the lifestyle of the indigenous people and set themselves up as tribal chiefs. Holden (1855) reports that while their assimilation into the tribal lives of the natives was kept secret, he knew for a fact that:

...they all had Kafir wives and concubines, and as many of them as suited their wishes or convenience, varying from one to ten. Let any man attempt to deny it, and we will give them demonstrative proof to the contrary, by pointing to a mixed colour of skin, and a peculiar physical conformation in the rising progeny, which speak for themselves. A certain black lady whom I could name, is the widow of one of these young men: she is the great ‘inkosi kasi’, that is, the chief wife or widow of this young gentleman; and sometimes honours her guests with a sight of the armchair in which her late spouse used to sit (p. 44).

Holden’s (1855) view sets the context for the way English colonists distanced themselves from those who adopted an African lifestyle. He contended, “It is much more easy for man to descend in the scale of being from civilized to the savage, than to rise from the savage to the civilized; and in strange lands, surrounded by barbarous life, great care is required in the settler to prevent such a degrading lapse” (p. 44).

Holden’s view of superiority is important for contextualising the alienation of the indigenous people from the colonists who perceived civilization through western norms and values. Holden’s contempt for the way of life of natives and reference to their savagery reveals a strong attachment to the preservation of the British culture. Alongside this view was a strongly held paternalism reflected in the journals of Colenso (1855):

About dusk I was told that Ngoza was waiting to pay his respects to me. I happened to be dressing at the time, and was naturally unwilling to keep anyone waiting, so was making what haste I could in donning my apparel. But I was told there was no necessity whatever for this – that, in fact, it would be quite the thing to keep him waiting for some time – he would, as a matter of course, expect it – time was of no consequence to him, and he would amuse himself, somehow or other, in the courtyard until I came out (p. 45).

The views expressed bring to the fore the roots of the stereotypical image of the placid native that contrasts with the other stereotypical view of the warring savage. Holden’s posturing stance exposes his imperial attitude towards native tribesmen.

The Voortrekkers, led by Piet Retief, entered Natal in 1837. During their time in Natal, the Voortrekkers began examining possible solutions for what was identified as a 'native' problem. Increased numbers of 'native' people returned to their homeland after Mpande returned to Zululand (McKinnon Ivey, 2008). The Voortrekkers perceived this as "an invasion of their land" (McKinnon Ivey, 2008, p. 17). The Volksraad called for the complete "removal and segregation of the 'native' populations of Natal" (McKinnon Ivey, 2008, p. 18). When Cloete was appointed as commissioner of Natal, the Voortrekkers cited the problems of security and cattle theft to urge him to have a more favourable position towards them and to create a 'native' reserve. Cloete was reluctant to accede to their suggestions as he feared the effects of amassing such a large population of natives in one location. He therefore suggested the establishment of several 'native locations'. When Shepstone was appointed as Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes residing within the District of Natal in November 1845, the scene was set for implementing the British colonial design for control of the African population. Holden (1855) described Shepstone's mission:

The plan of government devised was, to preserve the Natives distinct from the whites; and, for this purpose, large tracts of country were set aside, under the designation of 'Locations for the Natives'. On these Locations the Natives were to be collected, and governed by their own laws, through the medium of their own chiefs; Mr. Shepstone being the great chief, trying all cases, settling all disputes, and inflicting all punishments.

... The large tracts of country, thus selected, were such as Natives alone could use, being exceedingly rugged and mountainous, and only fit for such people to occupy: but, in more open parts, if a farm happened to be claimed by a native, the claimant was to have another farm given in some other suitable place by government, so as to allow the Locations to remain entire. The Kafirs were then all ordered off from private lands, and the neighbourhood of towns, where no squatting was to be allowed. These orders were given in 1846 (pp. 176-177).

From 1845 to the incorporation of Natal into the Union of South Africa in 1910, the policy of Shepstone dictated the organization and control of the 'native' population of well over 100,000 people (McKinnon Ivey, 2008). The main aspect of Shepstone's policy was the introduction of the location system that "would include the concept of gradual 'civilization', in which the 'native' Africans would maintain elemental aspects of their culture, namely the traditional chief system, in an attempt to gradually bring the 'native' tribes into the fold of a 'civilized', Christianized people" (McKinnon Ivey, 2008, p. 2).

4.2.2 Everyday Life in Natal at the turn of the 19th Century

I have briefly shown above aspects of the British strategy for control of Natal. As Popke and Ballard (2004) have intimated, Natal was administered through the mechanisms of indirect rule, which created a division between the subjects and spaces of a modern, urban European domain and a 'primitive', rural African realm.

In the following section, I trace those changes in relationships that emerged at the end of the 19th century. It is through pertinent colonial sentiments of alterity that identity and spatial constructions emerged that are relevant for this study that looks at the educational experience of the learners at *Good Hope School*. The way colonial authorities took control of people, places and spaces is important for the way people, places and spaces continue to be viewed in the present era.

By the time *Good Hope School* was established in 1895, the British were entrenched as the colonial power in Natal. The school began as a girls only school but soon admitted boys and eventually became a co-educational space. By 1900 it had admitted 254 girls and 79 boys (Vietzen, 1973).

In the following section I trace important indicators related to the everyday life of the province in terms of norms and practices that have impacted the way the community has developed. Those indicators continue to impact the context in which the school exists, the way the school conducts its mandate for education and the way the learners in the present understand themselves and experience education. I focus on everyday life problems pertinent to the way identity and associative groupings emerged in the 20th century. I highlight the controls established to ensure the safety of the colonial people, the very early establishment of norms and practices that were included and accepted and those that were treated as deviant. I provide a selected tapestry of contexts so as to view the present from some of the relevant perspectives of the past.

4.2.2.1 Establishing Alterity

Evans (1911) opens his book *Black and White in South East Africa*, with the following words:

As I sit on my verandah on the Berea Ridge the lovely Sabbath day, with the sunlit Indian Ocean in the foreground, and behind the rolling grassy hills,.... Three distinct sounds come to my ear. The nearest is that of the piano lightly touched, and a youthful voice singing in low tones hymns Ancient

and Modern. From the native quarters at the foot of the wooded garden the monotone of abantu singing reaches me, accompanied by the rhythmic beat of heavy feet stamping in unison. Further away among the banana plantations, comes the lighter reiteration of the Indian tom-tom.

The rhythmic sounds of the colony was the setting for the ways in which alterity was established in Natal. I look at three aspects of this: interracial marriages, the arrival of Indians and indigenous cultural youth groups. Each narrative is chosen to represent those labelled deviant by the colonial authorities as a means of creating controls over them. The unfolding stories show how identities were silenced through a systematic process of privileging the British way of life. Simultaneously there was contestation over territory that was conducted in a ruthless and exclusionary way. The first section examines how interracial marriages as well as colour were used to develop alterity. Secondly, I look at the arrival of Indians (an important historical moment of change) and their treatment by the authorities. Thirdly, I consider the marginalisation of indigenous youth groups in the Durban space. By way of introductory comments I situate the discussion in relevant commentaries taken from the school logs.

4.2.2.2 The Genesis of Alterity in the Context of *Good Hope School*

The historical narrative of those who are not 'white' is largely ignored in the account found in the school logs. People of colour are only referred to in very indirect ways. A close reading of the logs reveal the absence of people of colour in the life of the school except as workers (in the case of the African population) or as nuisances (in the case of indentured Indians). The logs indicate that the school community assumed supremacy of race over all people of colour. The content of the logs do not overtly speak of supremacy or address issues of race. It is only in the interruptions of the rhythms, through the intrusion of other race groups into that space, that the tone of reporting is revealed.

At the beginning of the 20th century terminology that is today understood as racist was used. On 17 May 1904 the principal wrote: "... girls found a coolie boy shut in one of the outhouses. Boy escaped over the fence. Kafir followed. Unable to discover coolie..." and again on 11 August 1904: "Coolie found in out-house by junior teachers. Escaped over fence..." An entry on August 1st 1917 related to the school being "used temporarily as a hospital to natives and coolies laid up with East Coast Fever".

The above were the only references to people of Indian descent in the logs from 1904 to 1966. From about the First World War the offensive ‘k’ word was replaced by the word ‘native’. On the 11th February 1944 the principal reported, “Authority received to employ a fifth native boy at this school”. The use of the term ‘boy’ shows the subordinated position assigned to those defined as ‘native’. The most common reference to ‘natives’ was in terms of the annual purchase of uniforms or in matters related to work. Exceptions were notes on 14 October 1904 and 21 December 1906:

Marie¹⁰ complained of indecent remark made to her in passing by native on her way home. Confirmed by Joseph, native walking (with one she knew) by sight working near school. Desired her to watch latter and find out where he hired. Surprise at not receiving any notes from Marie’s family.

The above report reveals an underlying animosity to the Africans, as well as the assumption of racial superiority by the principal and teacher. The nature of the “indecent remark” is not clear but that it was made by a ‘native’ appeared to be the reason for the complaint. That is of course a supposition on my part but not without merit considering that the logged incident appears to have happened outside of the school precinct, and that the reporting about ‘natives’ and ‘coolies’, in the log books, tend to indicate a sense that they were not considered as fellow citizens of Durban.

The second entry (21 December 1906) reads: “Keys of school stolen from kafir house also kafir clothing on the afternoon of the 19th. Communicated with police. Reported to assistant inspector and district engineer”. In all the cases of theft reported in the logs, no suspicion was thrown on any persons and the matter was left for the police investigation.

The principal’s log of 13 February 1905 referred to a ‘coloured’ child at the school, and of the racial prejudice of one of the parents:

Received a letter from Mr. Williams saying his daughter had been instructed by him to leave at once if placed next to a coloured child and requesting that I would see in future that this did not occur. Send child back with note saying complaints should be made to me and if he instructed his children to break rules of school, should be glad for children to be withdrawn also. That child could not re-enter class without apology to teacher. Child did not return.

¹⁰ All names have been changed.

Five years later, the admission of ‘coloured’ children to the school was terminated. On 8 February 1910 the newly appointed principal wrote: “Inspector Norton rules that the two boys of Mrs Florence and June Murphy, Bluff must not be admitted to this school because they are coloured”.

From the above entries it is clear that separation of races was a contested issue. That the inspector was able to deny entry to individuals on the grounds of their race indicates the extent of the power of school inspectors at the time. According to Malherbe (1925, p. 199), the superintendent was not only the directing power and executive head of education in Natal, but was the chief inspector as well. He was answerable only to the governor who appointed him.

While excluding local children of colour, the school was a sanctuary for children from all over the British Empire. When parents came from other colonies in Africa on long leave, their children were enrolled at *Good Hope School*. The school enrolment thus fluctuated from time to time. During the *Second World War* children from Egypt and Palestine were admitted at the school. They were referred to as evacuees. The school log reads as follows:

October 28th 1940. Children of soldiers of the army of Egypt and Palestine evacuated from those countries applied for admission. Admitted 82.
November 12th 1940. Evacuee children now number 94

January 27th 1941. During next few days another 50 evacuee children were admitted. Some had left and the number on the roll by February 21st was 139. Total roll at this date was over 570.

While it was not mentioned, I would assume that the evacuees were ‘white’ people. Race was only mentioned in the logs when the people were not ‘white’.

The only reference to children learning about people of different cultures was a reference to a class excursion to the museum where they were lectured on Egyptian civilization with the use of “lantern slides”¹¹ (logged on 28th March 1923) and later they learnt about the Zulus.

¹¹ The introduction of lantern slides in 1849, ten years after the invention of photography, allowed photographs to be viewed in an entirely new format. As a transparent slide projected onto a surface, the photograph could be seen, not only by individuals and small groups, but also by a substantial audience.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/landscape/lanternhistory.html>

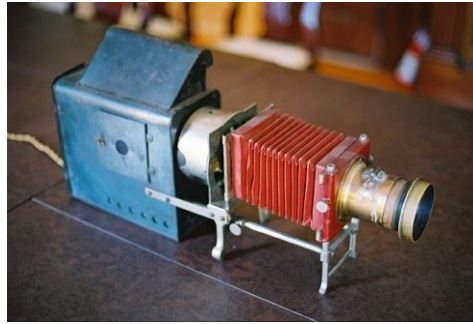


Figure 8: Lantern slides¹²

As has been mentioned, Europeans and the British generally viewed indigenous people as savage, backward and in need of civilizing. Indeed, Popke (2003), when speaking about Durban, says, “the city was a pioneer in developing practices of urban segregation, practices which became central to the later policies of apartheid in South Africa” (p. 250).

Before I develop my argument on the present day identity of the community in Durban under discussion, I bring to the fore the lives of those alienated by the colonial discourse. The institution that the school is today is not isolated from its past but is in fact a progeny of that past. By situating the historical space in the lives of the people at the school as well as those who are the victims of a vicious colonial discourse, the present complexities in which the school has become a haven for those marginalised and degraded in their own personal spaces is made clearer. I do not claim to be making unique discoveries but do feel that the importance of the historical context in the educational context has been neglected in recent research. Other spatial studies relevant to my approach which are situated in Durban have been conducted by Popke (2003), Popke and Ballard (2004) and Hentschel (2011; 2013). These do not focus on educational experiences, however, as this thesis does. I perused archival material from Pietermaritzburg and Durban to uncover pertinent aspects of the colonial history.

¹² Sourced from:

<http://www.google.co.za/imgres?imgurl=http://proteus.brown.edu/lanternslides/admin/image.html%3Fimageid%3D4034175&imgrefurl=http://proteus.brown.edu/lanternslides/&h=331&w=493&sz=48&tbnid=weeXeT-fhb>

4.2.2.3 The Family, Marriage, Identity and Colonial Control

It has been shown by reference to the school logs how children of colour were excluded from the school early in the 20th century. However, the problem actually emerged in the Natal colony in the 19th century. This is pertinent not only for tracing the beginnings of exclusion on the grounds of colour but also for understanding the colonial mind-set in terms of the legalities of what constituted marriage and a family.

From the views of Holden (1855) we understand that what was perceived as normal was the monogamous marriage and nuclear family of British culture. Important to realise is that not only was the historically accepted family the nuclear family (mother, father and children) but that that family was also preferred to be 'white'. In the evidence it is seen that marital unions other than the 'white' norm were not recognised. In addition, the colonial discourse contained the repressed Victorian view of sexuality. Sexual nonconformity was portrayed as a deviation from respectable human behaviour. This study views sexuality as "a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural" origins (Spargo, 1999, p. 12). Aspects of the colonial definitions of the family and sexuality survive to the present era. Even though many families do not fit into that norm, such family structures are celebrated as virtuous. In the following section I reflect further on the family construct as defined in the early colonial period in Natal.

Correspondence between British subjects who married African women and the local authorities show the difficulties imposed on such unions by the authorities. A case in point is a letter from a W. Robson¹³ regarding the refusal of the magistrate to register the birth of his children whose mother was a 'native' woman¹⁴. The case was taken up by Henry Wiltshire (Member of the Legislative Assembly, Natal) to who W. Robson's letter had been addressed. Robson and his brother had married 'native' women according to the local 'native' custom. They tried to legalise their unions by applying to the local magistrate but were refused permission. They then married their wives in the church but found that even then their marriages were not recognised. In his

¹³ In matters of historical significance, the names of the actors have not been changed.

¹⁴ Pietermaritzburg. Colonial Secretary's Office, 31 July 1905, EE1288/05, letter, W. Robson to H. Wiltshire, 21 July 1905,

letter Robson says, “There are numbers of such marriages in this colony”. He urged Wiltshire to help him as he had been under the erroneous impression that since he had married in the church his marriage should be recognised by law. His closing comments state: “As things now are my children will have to follow the status of their mother and will be classed as natives. This I do not wish as it is an injury to myself, my wife and children. The object in life is to raise human beings and not reduce them to natives”. Although married to a ‘native’ Robson’s attitude, in my opinion, was no different to that of other colonial people of the time (such as Holden) in terms of what was deemed to be civilized. The shame attached to racial classification and marital status mirror the feelings of shame that emerge in present day discourse. The colonial construct that condemned interracial marriages had far reaching implications not only for the way such unions were perceived, but more importantly for the consequent fallout for the children from such marriages.

4.2.2.3.1 The Durban School and the Children of St Helena (1875)

Whilst *Good Hope School* was first confronted directly with racial issues around 1905 in the early years of its existence, difficulties around the admission of children of mixed race marriages predate its establishment.

In 1875 a school known as The Durban School was forced to deal with the issue of children of mixed race from the island of St Helena. The children from The Durban School were excluded in April 1875 after ‘white’ parents withdrew their children because the school allowed children from St Helena to attend there. In the reports there is evidence that the children from St Helena were expelled on the grounds of their skin colour.

A letter from the superintendent of education to the colonial secretary written on 19 August 1875¹⁵ mentioned a “half breed of good character” married to a ‘white’ woman who was seeking admission for his child into the government school. The letter is pertinent as it was the same year that the children from St Helena, along with children classified as ‘Cape children’, were expelled

¹⁵ Pietermaritzburg. Colonial Secretary’s Office, 19 August 1875, 2455/1875, No. 158, minute/letter, Superintendent of Education to Colonial Secretary, 19 August 1875

from The Durban School, after 'white' parents objected to their presence at the school. A letter from three of the parents¹⁶ of the expelled children appealed to the colonial secretary to review the situation of their children. They accused the government of forming 'caste' and stated that it was not through "misconduct that they were expelled". They accused the superintendent of education of ignorance on the matters of the manners and customs of the St Helena people whom they insisted were "wholly English". These are early indications of how racial/national classification was closely associated with acceptance and belonging in the colonial discourse.

The notion of respectability was closely aligned to what was regarded as civilised behaviour. The report from the police superintendent on the same matter explained the attitude of the local British authorities at the time. He confirmed that a curfew had been placed on the people from St Helena. He reported as follows¹⁷:

... There are about fifty of these people in this Borough several of these have been released from their arrangements owing to their bad conduct: their employers forfeiting passage money and services. Several have been convicted of theft and drunkenness.... The inclination of the female portion are admittedly lewd, and immoral from choice. However, there are some of these people well conducted; so also are some of the Kaffirs, Hottentots and Coolies, but in a much greater proportion....

... Although the bell tolls at nine p.m., the law is seldom enforced till half past nine and never before quarter past. This I do at my discretion. I will fix the time at 9.30 pm should it meet with your worships approval, but it cannot I apprehend, apply to any particular section of the coloured population. Since the law No. 15 1869, came into operation, prostitution in the streets with its attendant consequences and nightly depredations, have almost disappeared.

The superintendent's views portray attitudes towards people from St Helena that were also found towards Indians and urbanised African youth (to be discussed later). Central to his argument rationalising the curtailing of movement was the insinuation of depravity and lawlessness. People from St Helena had arrived in Natal on contract to work at the harbour and as skilled workers in various sectors. Evidence shows that their rights as British citizens were denied them.

¹⁶ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary's Office, document 36 of 55, Ref. 1875/2561, letter, Messrs Crowley and Green to Colonial Secretary, 21 June 1875.

¹⁷ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary's Office, Report, Superintendent of Police, 10 May 1875, pgs. 5 & 8.

By cancelling their contracts, employers were no longer responsible for paying their passage back to their home country.

At the height of the controversy about the exclusion of the children from St Helena from school the idea of establishing a separate school for them was discussed. This idea was rejected by a communique written on 28 April 1875¹⁸ which stated that a separate building for the St Helena children would “...be out of the question. It can cast a slur on the children, and be a departure from the whole option of government education most unjustifiable in ...and creating a most dangerous precedent”. Yet on 10 June 1875 an instruction was given to “Authorise the superintendent of education to enter into negotiation with the Corporation of Durban for a site for the school for St Helena children...”¹⁹

On 13 December, 1875, the colonial secretary included the following statement in his minute²⁰:

... St. Helena children were so depraved and vicious that they, the European parents, could not allow their children to associate with them. A full enquiry having been instituted H.E. Sir Garret hereby came to the conclusion that the assertions of the European parents were not true out of the facts of the case, and that there was no just reason why St Helena and European children should not be admitted on the same footing to schools under the control of the Government.

However, by 1876 the segregation of schools had become a reality. Exclusionary policies were enforced on the grounds of perceived racial adulteration, as evidenced by Lieutenant Governor Bulwer’s letter to the colonial secretary on 8 February 1876²¹ to ascertain the facts about two sisters, the children of Mrs John Sherrard, a widow, whose one daughter “being fairer than the other was kept at school” while her sister was sent away with the excluded children.

¹⁸ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Ref. 1988/1875, minute, Colonial Secretary, 14 April 1875.

¹⁹ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Ref. 1159/1875, minute, Messrs Crowley and Green to Colonial Secretary, 10 June 1875.

²⁰ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Ref. 3515/1875, Minute, Colonial Secretary, 16 December 1875.

²¹ Pietermaritzburg. National Archives of South Africa, Colonial Secretary’s Office, document no. 5, Ref. 270/1876; 1159/1875, minute, Lieutenant-Governor to Colonial Secretary, 8 February 1876.

The ensuing report of the superintendent went to great lengths to describe the children's racial features:

The older of the children, a fine child of ten years or so, with dark hair and eyes, and of an olive complexion, having nothing of the St Helena or African type but reminding one of the Italian parentage which has been attributed to her, the younger, a thorough white Saxon maid, of five or six years old, yellow haired, fair skinned and of blue eyed...

He also went on to remark that those who had complained were from a lower class and that their children did not belong at The Durban School as schooling them there was like taking children from "the slums of Portsmouth into a quiet country town".

Today, more than a hundred years later, whilst colour and race are not used as criteria for admission, some former 'Model C' schools do apply policies of exclusion based on parents' ability to pay fees. At *Good Hope School* underlying attitudes that have a distinct colonial bias are present and will be explored further. The important points being made are about the roots of alterity through the marginalising and disadvantaging of anything not essentially British. In addition, the labelling of what would be deemed deviant in the moral coding of social norms is important.

4.2.2.4 Arrival of Indians and the Territorialising of Urban Space

When indentured labourers (on contract) and passenger Indians (seeking business opportunities) arrived from India, the British colonial authorities viewed them even more suspiciously than they had the people from St Helena. They were referred to as "coolies" (indentured labourers) and "Indian merchants" (passenger Indians) by a Durban municipal councillor (Swanson, 1983). Their presence disrupted the notion of a predominantly European space as they increasingly occupied areas in the Central Business District. According to Vahed (2005) the merchant class "aroused the ire of Whites" (p. 450) because of their dominance and success as traders. Swanson (1983) explains as follows:

Whites perceived the Africans as a passive threat and affected a paternal regard for their allegedly natural subordination, but eventually they saw in the Indians a sophisticated and active menace to their own position in colonial society, competing for space, place, trade, and political influence with the imperial authority.

The arrival of Indians signalled a crisis in the already fractured relationship between the British and the indigenous people. In order to register his opposition to the recruitment of Indian labour,

Holden (1855) issued a pamphlet in which he decried the colony's handling of what he called the "Kafir Labour Question" (p. 178). He linked the labour crisis to the policies of Shepstone and decried the suggestion of importing labour from India or China:

Amongst the many plans which have been recently devised, is the one of importing Coolies from India or China, What! And is it really come to this? Is this the consummation of British enterprise, of British legislation, and of British philanthropy, - thus deliberately to hand over one hundred thousand Kafirs to irreclaimable heathenism and barbarism, until they shall be annihilated before the face of the white man or driven back into the depths of the interior, or only a few scattered fragments of them left remaining?

It is clear that Holden (1855) regarded the arrival of the Indians as a threat to the mission of civilising the natives. The threat was exacerbated by the Indians who brought in new religious and cultural practices that could thwart the project of civilizing the natives. Three hundred and forty-two indentured Indians arrived in Natal on 16 November 1860 on the ship called the *Truro*. Between 1860 and 1911, 152,184 immigrants arrived. While they were treated as a homogenous group by the Natal government, there were big differences amongst them in terms of class, caste, gender, religion and language. They came from areas as far afield as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the south and Oudh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the north east of India. Two thirds were male; 90% (137,099) were Hindus and approximately 8,000 were Muslim (Vahed, 2002).

The farmers in Natal required labour. The establishment of the Shepstone System resulted in Africans in Natal having little incentive to seek wage labour on white-owned farms or in the colony's growing urban areas (Popke, 2003). The Natal farmers therefore recruited Indians to work on the sugar plantations (Huttenback, 1966). The labourers were welcomed and their contribution resulted in increased sugar exports from £26,000 in 1863 to £100,000 in 1864. These figures are quoted by Huttenback (1966) from *The Mercury* on 19 January 1865. However, thirty years later, on 29 January 1895, the same newspaper declared:

The evils attendant upon the immigration of coolies, their low standard of living and morals, the introduction by them of disease and the ever-threatening outbreak of epidemics, not to mention other serious drawbacks - are too generally appreciated to leave room for contradiction.... (Huttenback, 1966, p. 275)

One of the laws the authorities used to distinguish between Indian labourers and merchants was Law 21, 1888 which facilitated the "Registration of Black Servants and Servants belonging to Uncivilised Races within the Boroughs of Pietermaritzburg and Durban" ("Pre-Union Statute Law Revision Act 42 of 1970," 2005). The law's primary purpose was to differentiate between

those who enjoyed citizenship rights and those who did not. Like the people from St Helena, the 'passenger Indians' claimed the civil and economic rights of British subjects. However, their citizenship rights were curtailed by legislation (following Natal self-rule in 1893²²) that led ultimately to "Indian disfranchisement, anti-immigration laws, poll taxing, and the denial of trading rights" (Swanson, 1983, p. 414). Protest action against this legislation led to the formation of the Natal Indian Congress under the leadership of Gandhi.

Alarmed by the increasing numbers of Indians, the Durban authorities tried to impose controls through various methods, including residential segregation, political exclusion and commercial suppression. Swanson (1983) explains:

The early 1890s were a time of political stress and commercial depression. Attempts by the Durban authorities to segregate Asians in locations, to exclude them from property rights, to remove the Indian immigration depot, to suppress Indian public festivals, to attack the administration of the government's railroad barracks, and to subject government facilities within the borough to municipal bylaws were the opening salvoes of a heavy engagement along the line of racial policy. In this complex of attitudes and behaviours public health, order, and convenience were inextricably tangled with the passions of commercial rivalry and communal antagonism.

Attempts at group segregation failed and controls were imposed through sanitary building codes and vagrancy laws instead. Ships carrying Indians were viewed suspiciously as disease ridden vessels by 'white' people and became the source of racial antagonism (Swanson, 1983). The view of slave-like Indians as being filthy and unhygienic persisted as a stereotypical view of "the metaphoric equation of 'coolies' with urban poverty and disease". This "sanitation syndrome" became the foundation for 'white' opinion and "a preoccupation of police and health officers in the South African colonies long before 1900" (Swanson, 1977, p. 390).

Throughout all the colonies race, as a clearly identifiable marker of difference, was used to create the means through which alterity could be explored. Indeed, racial oppression was the defining feature of colonial order (Popke, 2003). Through the process of control of norms and standards for acceptable behaviour, dress, language and numerous ways of living and being were established. Through a process of 'othering' races by imbuing their different ways of being with

²² In 1893 Britain granted Natal Responsible Government status over the affairs of the colony (Popke, 2003).

elements of savagery, immorality and variously perceived contaminants, the colonial authorities created the means through which they could establish their way of being as supreme. Said (2003) explains this view of reality:

It meant – in the colonies – speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which non-whites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend (p. 227).

While the Shepstone system was intended to keep the different racial groups separate, the demands for labour in the growing urban area of Durban brought different races together in the same space. In Popke's (2003) view, the presence of Indian and African labour in the urban space of Durban "disrupted the neat binary between the modern, European spaces of the city and the archaic, pre-modern spaces of the African countryside" (p. 251).

Cities have historically earned the reputation of being the spaces in which men are seduced and corrupted. Urban authorities have thus "engineered urban space in order to contain, restrict and undermine any behaviour considered dangerous or potentially criminal" (Hentschel, 2011). The differentiation and labelling of those who newly enter an established space launches various levels of contestation. *Good Hope School*, through its admission of migrant children, re-experiences what this means in the present era. Important to note at this stage is the way in which identity and behaviour are criminalised. The following section explores the colonists' view of the youth groups that emerged in Durban. Criminal behaviour is placed in a historical context as that which disrupts the peaceful rhythms of the colonial people.

4.2.2.5 Indigenous African Youth Groups and Alternate Livelihoods

In the 19th century a new urbanised youth culture emerged amongst indigenous African youth. This was particularly prevalent in the towns. These youth formations become known as Amalaita. According to La Hausse, (1990) the Amalaita were a consequence of "dislocation experienced by African societies in Natal and Zululand in the late nineteenth century" (p. 79). The members of Amalaita "adapted a repertoire of Zulu rural cultural practices and forms of self-organisation to cope with new conditions of life in town" (La Hausse, 1990, p. 79).

According to La Hausse, Detective R.H. Arnold of Durban's CID, claimed that Amalaita gangs originated in the same space where *Good Hope School* now stands during the early 1890s. The youthfulness of the gang members is attested to by J.F. McArthur, a sergeant at Greyville Station²³. He wrote that the members were “mostly small umfaans (abafana) working close to one another”. While denying their significance as power he admitted that “there is not a week that passes but there are numbers charged for congregating or playing mouth organs in the street”.

By 1900 Durban's African migrant population numbered 18 000 (La Hausse, 1990, p. 82). This was a consequence of rapid urbanisation following increased mining operations in the Transvaal and the transformation of social relations in the countryside that was “accelerated by a series of natural disasters: locust plagues in 1896, followed by drought and then a cataclysmic outbreak of rinderpest²⁴” (La Hausse, 1990, p. 85). Africans were forced into wage labour relations. In Durban, various industries grew and the Africans were involved in “togt²⁵ labour (comprising mainly dockworkers), ricksha-pullers, washermen and monthly servants” (La Hausse, 1990, p. 82). Togat labourers worked under loose arrangements and were therefore freer to work as and when they pleased. This led to fears from the colonial population about vagrancy and loitering that could lead to criminal behaviour. Their fears led to legislation that ensured greater control.

The Amalaita gangs had a “tightly bound sense of rural identity” (La Hausse, 1990, p. 91) that was under constant threat in the urban context in which they lived. Their incorporation of rural cultural practices, like stick fighting, into their activities was regarded as deviant by the authorities who sought to ban the carrying of sticks. A letter from the chief constable to the town clerk²⁶ suggested that it would be advisable to re-enact the law forbidding the carrying of all sticks in order to stop gang activity. While they were branded as criminals by the authorities,

²³ Durban Archival Repository; 3/DBN; 604/1916; 16/605; letter; 16th March 1916

²⁴ Rinderpest is an infectious viral disease that attacks cattle.

²⁵ *Togat labour: farmers often employed young boys from eight years of age on a casual basis to help in tasks such as milking cows, herding cattle, etc. This practice was referred to as "togt labour" (<http://www.tokencoins.com/larkan.htm#bobbin>).

²⁶ Durban Archival Repository; 3/DBN; 16/1605; letter; Chief Constable, Borough Police to Town Clerk; 15th March 1916

their everyday activities reflected their lives as rural youth. The gang members sported distinct dress styles that were a combination of westernised styles and tribal affiliation that expressed a kind of cultural resistance.

Around Durban, places of recreation such as shebeens grew. The shebeens were autonomous spaces in which customers could engage in cultural expression free from the gaze of the colonial authorities. However, the colonial authorities viewed such spaces as breeding grounds for attitudes that would present a “challenge to accepted moral codes and to the boundaries of subjectivity which formed the colonial order” (Popke, 2003, p. 259). The introduction of legislation in 1908 brought the shebeens and brewing of traditional beer under the control of the local authorities (Popke, 2003).

There was an active campaign by the authorities to close down dance halls in the city centre as a way of controlling entertainment, meetings and all forms of assemblies. On 9 June, 1932, the town council adopted the *Native Dance Halls and Meetings Draft Regulations*²⁷ that prevented ‘natives’ from conducting such activities without permission from the authorities. This was not only an attempt to control urban space but also to regulate any form of unified resistance to the authorities. Hentschel (2011) makes the link to the capitalist motivation clear:

Regulatory institutions such as hostels, compounds, jails and beer halls were designed to shape the lives, movements and habits of black workers in the city – always in relation to their work productivity and, at least at the beginning of the 20th century, also in regard to black workers’ manners, morals and health.

The criminalising of behaviour and outlawing of activities deemed to disrupt the rhythms of colonial space remains relevant in the present era in which behaviour ('disorderliness', 'provocative language' and 'indecent conduct') that is deemed to disrupt life in the ‘beautiful spaces’ is criminalised. In spaces designed for the poor, generally away from the ‘beautiful spaces’, there is greater tolerance of such behaviour. By establishing binary codes of conduct the colonials set standards for what was acceptable within particular discourses. I agree with the view of Popke (2003, p. 248) that “issues are not merely of ‘historical’ interest, for the legacies

²⁷ Durban Archival Repository; 3/DBN; 467C; Vols 1-2; 1931 – 1934; 4/1/2/1224; Native Dance Halls Meetings; 9 June 1932

of such colonial processes continue to haunt the boundaries of contemporary identities and social and cultural formations”.

Everyday life in Natal at the turn of the 20th century in the vicinity of *Good Hope School* set in motion the systems employed to judge and control behaviour that operate in the urban space of Durban today.

4.3 The Everyday Context of the Learners Who Attend *Good Hope School*

4.3.1 Safety and Security

This section presents the perspective of life in the city of Durban as experienced by the children themselves. Towards the end of the data collection phase learners were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 6). They completed part of it while watching PowerPoint slides (explained in Chapter 2). The places shown in the slides that were outside the school were generally perceived in a negative light and described as unsafe places. Learners chose Figure 9 (see below) as the place where cool kids hung out, where fights happened and where the learners’ language was spoken.



Figure 9: Area outside the school

The entertainment area bordering the school (Figure 10) was categorised as either where learners had fun or where they never went.



Figure 10: Entertainment area bordering the school

Baghel (2012) suggests that in the case of South Africa “the fear of crime is not just at the level of fear but can better be described as hysteria, paranoia or obsession” (p. 71). The learners in this thesis presented real experiences that showed a fear of crime and violence that cannot be dismissed as mere paranoia, hysteria or obsession. The narratives of the learners and adult respondents indicated that their fears were well founded in personal experiences. While the streets represented places of fear, the school itself was regarded as a safe haven.

The learners expressed great fear about their safety living in an environment in which violence was rife. In the following extracts they expressed it in a variety of different ways and explained their ways of dealing with it. Their strategies were mostly avoiding dangerous places and trying to move around in groups. When they were not at school the children mostly remained indoors. Outings were usually with other family members to church or to visit friends and relatives. The beach was not considered a safe place. Two extracts from interviews provide representative views:

Penny

Interviewer: ... what of the other kinds of dangers that you find there?

Penny: Like every single week there is like blood on the floor. Not in the flats, but around. You hear all this man was walking at night. And some people came and stab him.

Interviewer: And that happens a lot?

Penny: Ja like every week some.

Ossie:

Interviewer: Do you see dangerous things from your flat?

Ossie: No, but when you walking ... street you always see blood on the floor, fighting, break-ins

Interviewer: When do you see that?

Ossie: Mostly on a Sunday, when I'm walking to church

The violence was often associated with drug use. Most of the learner respondents spoke matter-of-factly about drugs as an inevitable reality of the lives of those that were associated with crime and violence. The drug trade took place around them and was a daily part of their lives. Their normality incorporated living with and experiencing crime and drug use.

Interviewer: *Is the area you are living in safe?*

Mandy: *There is security, but you know area by where they sell drugs, by that side...in the street, down*

Interviewer: *You can see them?*

Mandy: *Yes, ... people and that's why that side they stay*

Interviewer: *How do you know they are selling drugs?*

Mandy: *It was in the paper and every day police will be there, ja*

Interviewer: *Do they trouble you?*

Mandy: *I don't usually go that side*

Interviewer: *So you avoid certain places?*

Mandy: *Ja, like that side, I don't go there because my mother said I mustn't go there.*

Ike dealt with his personal safety by ensuring that he befriended people whom he thought could protect him. He had determined that 'knowing the right people' was a necessity for his protection. He spoke with all seriousness when he made the following suggestion:

Interviewer: *So you think the beach is a safe place?*

Ike: *Not anymore, but you have to have...in this town you have to know people to protect you...There's like big names, there's another boy Adam. Everyone is scared of him. He can fight. So when you with him, no one doesn't play with you.*

For most learner respondents street children presented a grave danger. Whether that perception was real or not is open to speculation. Because they are children there was a mixture of imagination and reality. It is difficult to know where to draw the line since the reality is so much part of what is imaginable. Many of them had witnessed the unimaginable on the streets and from the windows of their flats. They understood the limitations of the spaces where they could move around freely.

Interviewer: *Do you also go to the skateboard place?*

Ike: *No, I never go there, that's in North Beach*

Interviewer: *Is it too far away?*

Ike: *Naah, you can walk but it's dangerous to walk, there's always like street kids. New people always come in there. They like gangsters, they always have flick knives in their pockets. So that's why I never go to that place*

Interviewer: *What makes street kids so dangerous?*

Ike: *I think it's the glue. Maybe it's making them think like they the bosses or something and they... If they have nothing, they always find something laying around on the floor. So if there's litter, they will always find something especially stones and bricks...*

There was ambivalence about the real danger of street children. The ambivalence might be because the street children were often children of their own age. Ossie explained that street children were not really a danger because he knew some of them. One of them had attended *Good Hope School* and later became a street child.

Ossie: *No, there used to be a kid in our school. Now he is a street kid. None of us know what happened to him.*

Interviewer: *He was at the school and he left the school?*

Ossie: *Something happened...*

Interviewer: *What do you children think happened to him?*

Ossie: *They say that his mother died, then he became a street kid.*

Interviewer: *And besides the street kids, some people tell me there are drug dealers around this area?*

Ossie: *Ja, there are drug dealers. ... that stab other people. Like one boy he was stabbed in the bus*

Interviewer: *Why did he get stabbed?*

Ossie: *I don't know*

For Ossie the reason behind the fight was of lesser importance. While he thought the stabbing was because of money he did not think any money was taken. The ambivalence is clear. Ossie presented his narrative with a level of nonchalance that disguised any emotional attachment. Being accosted and getting stabbed was normalised as the violence to be inevitably confronted.

Some of the learners lived in flat dwellings around Berea where accommodation was sometimes cheaper than the beach area. They had to use public transport to and from school. In such instances their fears were enhanced by the fear of dangerous driving stereotypically associated with taxi drivers. But the greater fear was being on the street.

Interviewer: *And on the street? Around where you live?*

Lana: *Like there are too many street children. Like those street children now are like really... There is like this woman, she sleeps on the streets. But my mum says that those street children rape her. So like when she sees them, she runs away.*

Interviewer: *...And the street children, are you afraid of them?*

Lana: *Hmmm...Ja, but the street children are like, if you show them that you are scared, they will come for you, but if you act like you're not scared, they won't*

Interviewer: *Is there a time when they more scary than other times?*

Lana: *No, they always the same way, like one day, where me and my brother jump off to go home, so my brother is scared of him, so he ran, so the street children also ran after him. So that was the part where I was maybe scared. But my brother was really... cause there was a small shop there, cause they don't come in shop where there is a lot of people. And one street child was running after him, so he ran in the shop, so they passed.*

Lana shared Ossie's ambivalence about whether street children were dangerous but used Ike's strategy of avoidance in order to keep safe. As a girl the danger of rape was ever present.

In the environment where drug cartels operated, there was the lurking danger of the learners being drawn into their web of control. The learners were aware of the dangers of drug abuse through programmes at school. It is not surprising that Andy claimed to have thwarted such advances. There was a close game played between the imagination and reality.... Andy's story was spiked with great bravado. However, it could well have happened:

Andy: *But there's a lot of bad things happening there. Those naughty boys keep from... I'm afraid of them.*

... They sniff glue. They say can you give me money and if you say so you don't have money they say "I'm going to hit you", and they keep on threatening you. So one day I stood up to myself and said that I don't have money, and he said he's going to hit me and I told him "Hit me", and he just went away. ...

Interviewer: *So besides the street kids are there any other dangerous elements around where you live?*

Andy: *Yes, like you see those Nigerian people who steals children and then go and uses their body parts for medicine. That's the danger with that, the danger where I am, and some people keep keep shooting each other. And some are selling drugs, some threatening children to take a sniff of drugs.*

Interviewer: *Have you seen anything?*

Andy: *Yes, it happened to me once...*

Andy: *They said, "Take this." They said, "Suck here or else I'm going to kill you".*

Interviewer: *What were they sucking?*

Andy: *Drugs. They said I must suck it up and I just ran away. They were chasing me. I went to the police then they just stopped because they saw the cops. Then they just went away and I told the cops what people were trying to do, because I knew how they looked like and one of them I know. He lives in my flat. Then they got arrested. They forced him to show his friends that were doing that.*

Interviewer: *But how come they called you to come and*

Andy: *Isn't it, I know him?*

Andy used personal insight to add credibility to his story. What may well make his story incredible is the visibility and easy accessibility of the police. Other studies show that police play a different role in poorer areas to that which they play in areas considered more beautiful. They are less visible and accessible in poorer neighbourhoods. However, at the school the police were a constant presence. They assisted with the daily scholar patrol and a senior member served on the school's governing body. They also assisted the school with occasional spot drug checks. It appears that the school, like the more affluent areas on its border, is what Hentschel (2011) has called a 'charm bubble' where police presence creates safe spaces. Hentschel's explanation throws some light on the fractured nature of bubbles:

... if the city is dangerous and a lost cause, and one can only be safe in temporally and spatially limited bubbles, then creating bubbles of safety must be an act of creating distinct places: a safe place, according to this rationale, is a place distinct from the city. Hence it needs to look and feel different (2011).

The bubble metaphor imbues the space with a fleetingness. For learners who experience routinely having property stolen while they are on the street there are very few safe bubble spaces. Criminal confrontations generally happened when children were alone:

Terry: *Well once when I wasn't in the group, I was with my scooter... I think that was on the Saturday or something. I was with my scooter at It was nice with my scooter. They put knives on me like...*

Interviewer: *Mmm and did they take it?*

Terry: *They took it. They told me they going to poke me if I don't give it to them. So I just gave it to them and then I went...*

Terry: *No that was last year*

For these children, being accosted and deprived of personal belongings was just part of daily life.

Ike: *Ja, last year I had my phone stolen. Two street kids, they pulled me to the corner and they showed me the knife and he said give me the phone.*

Interviewer: *And so you just took it and you gave it to them?*

Ike: *Ja, because if I didn't do they would have stabbed me, right there, everyone can see but no one came to help me. Even if they stab you right there, they will just look at you. No one will call the ambulance.*

All those associated with the school that I spoke to described the area where the learners and some staff lived as dangerous. The area was also very run down and overcrowded. This made life for the learners who lived in such degradation extremely difficult. When adult respondents came into contact with that reality, it was eye opening. Both adult respondent 2 and adult respondent 1 spoke about the overcrowded, unsanitary conditions under which many of the children lived.

Adult respondent 1: *...And maybe we're living ten of us in one room. It's normal. So I don't even see that... because most of my peers live like that around here. So maybe it's a new normal...*

Adult respondent 2: *And they share one communal toilet and a bathroom. It's like upstairs and they all go. All the people living in that floor go upstairs to use a very messy toilet and bathroom... Yes, I know that one boy I taught last year - living on Road, but going right down to another building to fetch buckets of water to bath...*

Adult respondent 1 also told me of a child in the junior school who was sent home because she had lice in her hair. She did not want the person who accompanied her to see where she lived but was forced to do so and the person accompanying the child found the family living in a hovel behind one of the flats. They had no running water or sanitation and the place was extremely filthy.

A learner described the conditions under which she lived:

Penny: *The place is an orange building and we share a room. Like I sleep in this room with my sister and my aunty. She's getting married to my uncle. In the next room is sharing with men.*

Interviewer: *The men sleep in the next room? How many men sleep in that room?*
Penny: *Three.*
Interviewer: *And your parents where are they?*
Penny: *We have like a balcony that's where my parents sleep.*
Interviewer: *The balcony is closed?*
Penny: *No it is like with a curtain.*
Interviewer: *A curtain. And in winter time? Doesn't it get cold in winter time?*
Penny: *No my mother has blankets.*
Interviewer: *Okay. So it's the balcony and there are two rooms.*
Penny: *One-room.*
Interviewer: *It's just divided? I'm trying to understand.. if this is the room and men are this side... And you are here with your aunty.*
Penny: *The toilet is that side and this is where I sleep and the other room is for the men.*
Interviewer: *So you are in like the sitting room. You and your sister sleep with your aunty.*
Penny: *Yes.*

Most of the learners interviewed lived with one parent in bachelor or one bedroom accommodation. Boarders were taken in to supplement the family income and enabled them to pay the rent. Lana described her situation:

Interviewer: *Okay, how many rooms in your house?*
Lana: *One and a half*
Interviewer: *Okay. And are there three of you staying there or are there more of you staying there?*
Lana: *There are more*
Interviewer: *How many of you stay in the house?*
Lana: *In the big room, there are three people staying there.*
Interviewer: *Okay, who are they?*
Lana: *These people that rent there, cause the rent is very expensive and the owner of the flat says that he wants to put the price up, so my mum can't afford to pay the whole rent, so she put three people in.*
Interviewer: *So she brings in boarders - people giving her money to stay there?*
Lana: *Yes, and we stay in the half bedroom. My mum, she pays the most, cause... Let's say the rent is 1000, she is going to pay 500 and the other three will divide the other 500 by 3.*
Interviewer: *How did they come to that arrangement? Because you are three and they are three?*
Lana: *I don't know. If the price was up, I don't think we would have gotten someone to stay there...*

The table below (Table 1) sets out living space and family dynamics of learners interviewed. The size of the accommodation and numbers who lived in one dwelling varied. Not all learners lived in overcrowded conditions. However, many had other problems that were equally complex to deal with.

Learner	Parent/guardian	Area	House/Flat	Number of Bedrooms	Number of people in flat/house
Lana	Mother	Berea	Flat	1½	7 (family and boarders)
Penny	Mother and father	Berea	Flat	1	8 (family and boarders)
Ike	Mother	South Beach	Flat	Bachelor (no separate bedrooms)	3 (family)
Andy	Guardian	South Beach	Flat	No info	4 (extended family)
Philiwe	Mother	City centre	Flat	1	3 (family)
Sammy	Father	North Beach	Flat	2	3 (family)
Ossie	Mother and father	South Beach	Flat	1	5 (2 families)
Kanya	Guardian	Montclair	House	3	5 (extended family)
Mandy	Mother	South Beach	Flat	2	6 (2 families)
Carl	Mother and father	Umlazi	House	3	6 (family)
Terry	Father	South Beach	Flat	2½	5 (extended family)

Table 1: Living spaces of learners interviewed

Besides the dangers of crime there were other dangers that learners faced. Penny described a horrific incident when their flat caught fire:

Penny: ... My baby sister was still awake. She didn't want to sleep. And my mother went. When she was about to go to the toilet, she saw like fire - there is like a window, and she saw fire on top, and she was screaming, 'Fire! Fire! Fire!' I almost jumped out of the window and my mother's like, 'No this way'. All the neighbours they were like fast asleep, and my mother went to wake the neighbours. And she woke up those neighbours those neighbours thought he was a thief in the house.

Interviewer: They didn't think it was fire?

Penny: Ja, and then my mother went and knocked at all the doors, and they all came out they saw it is fire. Then the top didn't get my mother. My mother went up the stairs. So she poured like water to say it was fire. The people decide to go down in the others that the fire was so much. They did what my mother did. They followed, and they came down too and it was this other man who fell. He jumped out of the window. He fell and broke his leg and he wants to jump, because it was like this, like the ledge, and he wants to jump from the ledge and he fell down...

Ja, then people told him not to jump. The fire-fighters are coming then he can come down. Anyway and there is this other women she jumped out of the window, but she didn't get hurt. She was fat, and he took one by one of his children throwing them out the window and catching them.

Interviewer: People outside were catching them?

Penny: Yes, keep throwing them just like that and then there was this baby who was like 5 months. He throw the baby, but the people would be very careful that time. They caught the baby and my mother was like, 'Oh it's an angel sent woke up my baby sister not to sleep'.

....

Interviewer: And the man who did that, what happened to him?

Penny: The owner refused to catch him. He wants to go to the court so that they must give them money to repay the building. He didn't want that man because if he told it be that man they would say he must pay.

Penny was very animated as she told the story and relived the horror of it all. As a result parts were not totally coherent but she captured the dreadfulness of being in such a situation. Lurking in the background to this story was the slumlord who lied about the circumstances of the fire in order to ensure he got the insurance pay out.

Fire hazards are endemic in overcrowded living conditions. Penny explained how they prepared food when the electricity was switched off.

Interviewer: *How do you manage, how do you manage to cook if there is no electricity?*

Penny: *When there is no electricity, we take the wood. We have this braai-ing thing like and we put the wood.*

Interviewer: *You do that. You do that in the flats?*

Penny: *Ja. A lot of people do that.*

Electricity cut offs were common and residents resorted to making a fire inside the flat in order to cook their food. Indoor open flame cooking on a braai was part of their lives because they could not afford the electricity or paraffin stoves. Murray (2009) in his study of unnatural disasters that affect the urban poor, concluded that “by focusing attention on the catastrophic fires that regularly destroy shanty settlements ... it is possible to reveal a largely hidden structure of marginality and social insecurity that is a permanent condition of everyday life for the urban poor” (p. 165).

Such marginalisation was also evident in accessibility to leisure spaces just a stone’s throw from where the learners resided. The area was close to some of the best beaches in South Africa but few learners spoke of exploring that space. Instead it was presented as a place of danger which was out of bounds. After a drowning incident some years ago (a learner drowned while the class was on an excursion at the beach) teachers no longer took children on excursions to the beach. A teacher told me that it was not that they were prevented from going there but they recognised the trauma the principal experienced every time they mentioned wanting to take their learners to the beach so they refrained from going there. The school logs indicated that the beach had over the decades been a source of trouble for the school:

13 February 1905

... Received information of death by drowning of John a little boy who had not yet returned to school.

A learner spoke about a problem that he encountered that had made him fear the beach:

Andy: *Something happened at the beach. The people one man touched me. So I don't like it for him to touch me. One man touched me, where they are not allowed to touch. When I was running away he was keep pulling me and tried to drown me.*

Interviewer: *Oh, while you were in the water?*

Andy: *Yes swimming. That is why I don't like to go to the beach it is dangerous.*

Interviewer: *Since when, have you stopped going?*

Andy: *Last year.*

Few children spoke about the beach as a place to have fun. They sometimes played soccer there or on hot days they played in the water. Swimming and other water sports did not feature strongly in their lives. The beach was also the place where children sorted out disagreements among themselves:

Ike: *No, but they said that when the holiday club come, ...when they came here on the last day of the holiday club ...and then they went to have a fight at the beach.*

Interviewer: *Oh they left the school and they went to go fight elsewhere. But the problem started here. And then what kind of fight was it, just a fist fight?*

Ike: *Ja, there was a fight, cause there was a boy, his name is Leon, that boy is like feared by almost everyone and he's like an expert in knives. He said no, we not fighting knives today, we fighting ...*

The narratives the children shared showed the dangerous environment in which they lived and which they traversed on their way to school. Crime and violence, an everyday feature of their lives, were accepted in an unchallenging way. Their self-exclusion from safe bubbles created in the tourist mecca speaks to a system of marginalisation that persists in the post 1994 era in new forms.

Hentschel (2011) conducted an inquiry into “the uses of space and emotions in the governance of urban dangers” (p. 148) in Durban. She noted:

High crime rates are accepted here as a given that cannot be overcome – just like the weather: useless to even waste a thought on how to change it. Crime can only be kept out of certain situations. Governing crime through charm initiatives in space is an undertaking on a small scale, and literally on the surface. It is an expression of and reinforces a politics of the here-and-now that seems largely detached from a complex problematic of violence ingrained in South African society.

She is critical of the response of the authorities who only attack the problem at superficial levels and do not get to the root of it. The authorities create what she calls ‘flirty’ spaces that create a false sense of security through charm incentives. Violence is hidden. Beautiful spaces are perceived as safe places. The illusion of security is created through the historically loaded sanitary arguments. Buildings and spaces recognised as rundown or filthy are equated with crime and violence.

Swanson (1977) in his article *The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909*, explained how public authorities in South Africa at the turn of the 20th century “were imbued with the imagery of infectious disease as a societal metaphor, and ... that powerfully interacted with British and South African racial attitudes to influence the policies and shape the institutions of segregation” (p. 387). While overcrowding, slums, public health and safety were interpreted primarily along the lines of class differences in industrial societies, they were perceived largely in terms of colour differences in the colonial context (Swanson, 1977).

The question that can be asked is whether there is a link between crime ridden, violent areas and an attitude that deprives the underprivileged of access to safety. Historical evidence shows how the authorities identified problems and attempted to diffuse them before they occurred. Unfortunately their analysis was based on perceiving certain race groups as criminal and limiting their movement and access. I agree with the view expressed by Rebotier (2011) that “fear of crime and insecurity contributes to consolidate, more than create, urban territorialities grounded on classism and racism” (p. 104). However, in the urban space around the school fear and violence is hidden and protected from the view of the more affluent. It is my opinion that the secrecy and silence prevalent in the community has an historical context and, as it did then, plays into the hands of those who are gaining greater control of spaces for the moneyed elite.

The city is faced with increasing numbers of urban poor people occupying unsightly and degrading spaces of urban blight. However, there appears to be no alternative for upgrading and supporting the poor to remain in the urban space. Durban, like other cities in South Africa has undergone dramatic changes following the historic democratic elections of 1994. The area under discussion was once a haven for privileged ‘white’ people only. In the post 1994 period a dramatic change occurred that saw properties change hands and the urban space is now occupied by race groups that had hitherto been kept out. In addition, the ranks of the flat dwellers have been swollen by an influx of legal and illegal migrants from war ravaged and economically unstable countries in Africa. This has resulted in new social dynamics of a multinational, multi-racial space. The changes in the spatial structure of the city result in changed dynamics between urban residents.

The interest of this thesis is how the learners who are practically trapped in such urban spaces negotiate their lives and cope at school.

4.3.2 New Urban Spaces and Marginalisation of Poor People

In the earlier narratives, the establishment of the basis for control of urban spaces to support the colonial way of life and social order is shown. In the post-apartheid era race is no longer used as a criteria for keeping people out of city spaces. In the present time new forms of marginalisation and control have emerged. Much of it resembles the old but it wears a new coat of respectability earned from struggles that succeeded in the overthrow of apartheid. However, the veil of respectability has worn thin and new lenses make visible that which was obscured by notions of “respectable civic urbanism” (Murray, 2008, p. 147) designed to alienate the unbeautiful and the poor.

Bond (2004) argues that the government’s neoliberal policies have replaced “racial apartheid with what is increasingly referred to as class apartheid...” (p. 47). The notion that there is a new urban segregation based on class is supported by Murray who characterises city planning as reflecting a “cruel indifference to the plight of the urban poor” (2008, p. 211). Vermeulen (2004) concurs saying, “...changes have mostly produced a strong class resegregation, by polarizing the wealthiest households in former white areas and strengthening the inertia which affects the previously disadvantaged areas” (p. 1).

The thesis I develop argues that in the new urban spaces remnants and continuities of the past exist in new and complex ways. The marginalised poor experience inequalities and degradation in the spaces where they live and in the way society treats them. One of the most evident forms of violence against the poor is the absence of a secure environment. The narratives presented show the learners’ daily experience of life in the urban space. Murray (2008) explains how “the urban jungle imagery enables city builders to downplay the root causes of social conflict in impoverished inner city neighbourhoods by externalising the social complexities of urban lifeworlds to the realm of mythologized uncivil nature” (p. 211). I assert that the “uncivil nature” he alludes to has its roots in the historical setting in which it was born (explained earlier). The metaphor uses a Euro-centric understanding of what being civilized means and thereby reinvents the notion of alienation through that notion.

This study shows that the areas where poor people are forced to reside are crime ridden and unsafe. Murray (2008) explains that while the suburban elite retreat to citadels on the fringes of the city, the urban poor eke out a nomadic existence “shuffling between the cracks and crevices” (p. 16) in dilapidated public spaces. For them, he says, “There is no rightful place in the city” (p. 16). On the surface this assertion implies that city spaces are largely deserted by moneyed elite. This study shows that in the area adjacent to *Good Hope School* is a site that shows how new spaces are being created (with the assistance of the municipal authorities) to reclaim urban spaces for a burgeoning elite. This practice does indeed have the poor scurrying into spaces in the “cracks and crevices” that are constricting as the urban space becomes reclaimed by the power of capital. The gentrification policy of the city council has already reclaimed many selected spots around the city as beautiful spaces (e.g. The International Convention Centre, Moses Mabhida Stadium, Ushaka Marine World and the new Point Development Project). It pushes the poor into smaller areas and some contend that the intention is to eventually drive the poor out of the central urban space.

The surrounding (more beautiful) areas are provided with security and perceived to be an environment safe not only for those inhabitants but for the growing tourism industry. Safety for the tourism industry is the ultimate litmus test that defines safety in South Africa. Hentschel (2011), in her analysis, suggests that the safe spaces are a consequence of the authorities’ ability to outcharm crime in prestigious areas, buildings and neighbourhoods. The charm offensive is conducted through creating beautiful spaces (Hentschel calls them bubbles) and a safe environment in those spaces while neglecting areas perceived as poverty stricken and unsexy by the middle classes and tourists. Out of the ruins of the harbour area, for years neglected and marginalised, a new development has arisen. That area, bordering *Good Hope School*, has a beautiful image but is only metres away from the urban blight where the school children live. The intention is to create a distinction that recognises the “more beautiful when compared to their decaying surroundings” (Hentschel, 2011, p. 155). Murray (2008) uses the terms the ‘figured’ and ‘disfigured’ city. In the spatial landscape of the city the ‘disfigured’ become largely invisible as the ‘figured’ city dominates the memory and imagination. Murray suggests that it is at the points where the two intersect that points of conflict emerge.

In the narratives of the Amalaita as well as evidence of controls over people from St Helena and India unsuitable behaviour was defined in ways that criminalised that which upset the peaceful existence of the colonial population. The controls gradually pushed the inhabitants further from the city centre into spaces where their ways of living did not impinge on the colonial normality. As Hentschel (2011) argues, “The more apartheid pushed black people out of the urban centres, the less their moral attitudes mattered to the regime” (p. 150). As the apartheid space used the rationale of separateness and exclusion, the ‘new’ South African urban space condemns the poor to living in inhumane and degraded conditions through the creation of exclusionary spaces and neglecting to upgrade and assist the living conditions of the urban poor. The living arrangements of *Good Hope School* learners continue to be that reality.

4.3.3 Family, Welfare and Food Security

The rapid urbanisation and demographic change in the urban environment in the post 1994 period resulted in increased numbers of urban poor. According to Frayne et al (2010) “poor urban households are facing significant pressures as a direct result of the current global economic crisis and the high price of food staples” (p. 10). As a result, urban food insecurity is emerging as an area of concern. Availability of food is not a problem but access is impossible if households do not have income. A baseline survey conducted in Cape Town by *Food Security Urban Network* in 2008 found that 80% of the sampled households could be classified as moderately or severely food insecure (Battersby, 2011).

Figures show that more than 50% of the world’s population is now urbanised (UN-Habitat, 2008) and the figures are growing. In South Africa more than 60% of the population is urbanised (Frayne, Battersby-Leonard, Fincham, & Haysom, 2009). This means that there are increasing numbers of poor people in urban centres. There is a clear contestation between the gentrification of the urban space and the increased pauperisation of urban communities. This is particularly stark in the area around *Good Hope School* that I have already described. While there is the wanton food wastage in the gentrified spaces, pauperised communities struggle to maintain food security. The economic downturn is resulting in increased pauperisation that is evident in the school community’s inability to meet demands of school fee payments and the community’s dependency on the school for welfare support.

In South Africa there has been a bias towards seeing food insecurity as a rural problem because the perception has been that poverty has a rural base. Perceiving poverty as a rural problem means that inadequate steps are taken to support city areas. In addition, the food insecurity problem is perceived as food availability (Battersby, 2011). While food is available, it is inaccessible to those who do not have purchasing power. This makes the urban poor more vulnerable to hunger than their rural counterparts who do not need cash in order to survive. *Good Hope School* has met the challenge of hungry children at their school by creating a feeding scheme that provides daily meals for all the children who need it. The school is not supported by the government's feeding programme because it is defined by government as not in need.

Throughout its history, *Good Hope School* has been associated with supplying food to its learners indicating that historically the school has had an association with the needy. In the past food was provided as a matter of course as part of the school's mission to all learners and not just those in need. In the present time the feeding scheme is conducted by a group of volunteers from a local church primarily for those in need.

There were mixed views from personnel at the school about the feeding scheme. For most, it was an important service that ensured that children did not go hungry, while for others it was a way out for delinquent parents who did not play their part in the raising of their children. Teachers agreed that while there were really poor children at the school who appreciated the feeding scheme, some children used it for convenience. A teacher explained:

Okay we have feeding scheme running right and every day we have nutritious sandwiches provided to the children and one day is peanut butter, one day is jam, now we noticed what the kids were doing when they lining up, when they looked at the bread, 'Oh peanut...jam' and they throwing it in the bin. So what do you say to that? You have, and you're just fussy or maybe you're lazy to bring lunch, maybe you can afford it because a poor child will never be like that will be like a luxury you'll just wait for that peanut, that jam, ... But there are some desperate kids. It's when you speak to the children and read their files it's actually scary.

A view was expressed that the school created dependency through its feeding scheme. The feeding scheme was extended to members of the community who it was felt made a nuisance of themselves at the school and created a security risk because they wandered in at out of the school as they wished.

Adult Respondent 1: *... I think what is happening here is we are encouraging this poverty mentality where children are so spoilt keep getting given stuff that they now expect everything to be done for them. And as much as the parents are not sending their children with food and sending their children*

with stationery I think because what is happening is they knew they would be given so now it's become a norm so they don't bother so I think what's happened here is actually assisted parents performing their parental duties.

Interviewer: *So they kind of not doing what they're supposed to be doing because they...*

Adult Respondent 1: *...because they know whether she doesn't have like the child doesn't have panties I'll go find panties. We don't pay school fees then that's fine. You can have 5 children and not pay school fees to them – that's fine. I can send my child the whole year without stationery somebody is going to give.*

Adult Respondent 1 was very concerned that the system was open to abuse and inferred that the abuse was already happening. She was of the opinion that there were enough organisations in the area that ensured that hungry people got fed regularly. The dilemma the school faced was how one judged credibility and differentiated between the very poor and the occasional poor. The reality was that families were thrown into poverty unexpectedly and sometimes for extended periods of time.

The learners in this study spoke of their reliance on the school's feeding scheme for their meals and showed that the school did indeed provide an essential service of alleviating hunger.

Penny: *My mother is always like "I'm looking for a job, because I don't think we can manage like this". Or sometimes in the morning we just go without.*

Interviewer: *You just go ...*

Penny: *Without eating. Go without eating.*

Interviewer: *But in the afternoon when you come home is there something to eat?*

Penny: *Sometimes. Sometimes, not every day.*

Interviewer: *So do you say that sometimes you go to bed without eating?*

Penny: *No we eat in the nights.*

Interviewer: *You do eat in the night.*

Penny: *Yes once a day.*

Interviewer: *Do you get food from the feeding scheme here at school and does your sister get anything from the feeding scheme?*

Penny: *No. They only allow one person [reference is to food parcels]*

Interviewer: *One per family.*

Penny: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Oh.*

Interviewer: *But food for both of you.*

Penny: *Ja.*

Interviewer: *You can both get your soup and your bread every day. Do you go and get bread every day from the feeding scheme?*

Penny: *Every day.*

Interviewer: *You go every day? And your sister?*

Penny: *Yes, she also goes every day.*

In this urban space poverty was multi-faceted and complex. Children who found themselves in more comfortable circumstances had also experienced poverty and food deprivation due to family problems. While a few children in the study had never experienced food insecurity, they

were aware of such problems suffered by other children in the community. While their lives improved from time to time their situations were unstable. Sammy explained:

I think it is actually quite hard for them because for them being poor it's actually going to be hard to pay their school fees and I'm sure they hardly get any... their daily meals. I'm sure they like hardly get any food most of the time. Sometimes children are poor they don't get lunch. That's why before when I used to stay in Cape Town I was like one of those children who had no food to take to school because my aunty didn't really care about us.

Sammy's problem stemmed from a marriage break up and their being placed at that time in the custody of an aunt who could not afford to keep them. Such family dynamics impacted on learners in different ways. In that instance Sammy was forced into a life of temporary poverty. Other learners like Khanya and Andy were forced by circumstances to live with other family members. Their lives were improved because their guardians were better off than their own families. While Khanya experienced that positively, Andy (an orphan) was full of stories of his inability to fit into his new family after the deaths of his parents. Passing children on to relatives and friends who are better able to care for them is sometimes a consequence of unemployment (Klasen & Woolard, 2008). Parent deaths as a result of the AIDS pandemic have had similar outcomes.

While Sammy and his sister lived in the more upmarket area north of the school where there was more development and less urban blight, they practically lived on their own because they had been abandoned by their mother who lived in Gauteng and their father's wife refused to take care of them. Their grandparents used to take care of them but had become too old to do it any longer. Their father got them a flat in the same building in which he lived with his wife and children. During the day the domestic worker was at home with them. Their father came to stay with them in the evenings but also stayed with his other family leaving them on their own at times. A neighbour tried to be kind to them. Sammy explained his situation:

Oh at the flat. I do have one friend there. He's my neighbour. His name is Anwah. He's like my best friend in the building. He's always there to play with us weekends. He's quite nice. He's got a sister. He's got a little brother. And his mother is like the most kindest person I ever met. She always... When we come back from school she always sends food for my sister and I to eat for lunch when we come back from school and she always comes to check on us on the weekends when my dad isn't there. When she sends her kids over she comes and checks on us. She sends chips over when we playing sometimes. She's very kind.

The goodwill of neighbours and friends is part of the survival kit of poor communities. In the baseline survey of food insecurity conducted by *African Food Security Urban Network* in Cape Town it was found that there is a heavy dependence on informal social safety nets such as borrowing food from neighbours (Battersby, 2011).

Among the eleven learners interviewed for this study only two lived with both a mother and a father. This is in keeping with studies that show that single female headed households dominate in the South African family structure. Biddecom and Bakilana (2003) suggest that in the present era there are numerous “combinations and chronological sequences of important social and family formation transitions” (p. 2). The apartheid legacy has meant “family relationships and domestic arrangements remain complex and ‘fluid’, and the stable, discrete, nuclear-family household is far from standard” (Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses, & Seekings, 2010, p. 41). This study supports the findings of Bray et al (2010) that what is meant by family life and domestic arrangements for children of the current generation involves extremely varied experiences. Poverty compounds those problems.

Many of the learners in this study could not explain their absentee fathers. They were acutely aware of the struggles their mothers underwent to support them and developed hardened attitudes to fathers who become occasional visitors to their homes. Andy met his father for the first time shortly before his father died. Lana spoke disparagingly of a father who imposed himself on them occasionally and uncles who made demands on her mother’s meagre income from hawking. Ike had developed a strongly protective but close relationship with his mother. When he received an unexpected gift of a ‘snowball’²⁸ from a friend he put it away to share with his mother when he got home. Extra sandwiches distributed occasionally at the end of the school day were eagerly collected and taken home to share with his mother and sister. When food parcels were handed out in the class, he collected from those who didn’t want them to ease his mother’s burden of providing the family with food.

²⁸ A ‘snowball’ is a small cake covered with coconut.

Good Hope School's welfare programme provides a valuable service to learners and indigent community members.

4.3.3.1 Welfare Assistance and Survival

A view I heard from many teachers was that if the school relied solely on the state to support it, it would have collapsed a long time ago. Very few parents paid the school fees. The school had created a network of friends and organisations on which it relied for its survival. Many individuals adopted learners and paid their fees. Some organisations provided support but often dictated the terms of that support which some teachers found frustrating. For instance, teachers complained that they had important needs that were overlooked as the donor decided how the money was to be spent.

Some organisations had a fraternal relationship with the school and lent support in other ways. A complaint often expressed was that there were far too many interruptions in the academic programme to allow for visitors to make inputs. A group that had close fraternal relations with the school, and had adopted the school as one of its international projects, was the Tzu Chi Foundation. They brought a message of environmental awareness and the need for change in attitudes in order to protect the world from devastation. They conducted a moral and environmental awareness programme at the school. Their financial support was largely directly to recipients in need.

Adult Respondent 2 explained the work of the *Tzu Chi Foundation* at the school:

Adult Respondent 2: *...and the TzuChi also like I don't mind them coming because I've learnt so much. Every year is a new thing. It's a new thing and it's not the same old thing... Important disasters of the world because they always there – the first – the first sign of disaster, they there – helping, food, counselling. So they do such good work and plus they're giving 30 000. They always give lots of food and money for the children. Lots of gifts and our children get so excited when they're rewarded with gifts.*

Interviewer: *Ja*

Adult Respondent 2: *And they've given. ... We chose just the other day, a list came around. ... Mrs Sent for altruistic behaviour, academic performance and most improved learner. Now this is a Tzu Chi thing. So each child will get a certain amount of cash – maybe 50 or 100 or something and we also choose children that get bursaries and stuff. Were you here when they said they gave this child – she's orphaned now her mum used to sell on the road. Were you here when Mrs Thompson told?*

Interviewer: *I don't think so*

Adult Respondent 2: *Bella, a lovely girl, was in grade 7. Her mum, she was a schizophrenic but she used to also buy things from Everlastings to sell on the road just to make money so she could send her daughter to school... the mum died. She was quite young. I used to chat to her, when I used to go chat*

to her when I used to go to the beach and her daughter is very beautiful, this girl. She is living at one of the orphanages and Tzu Chi has decided they will pay all her school fees and her university fees. She is finishing matric this year. She is studying law so they going to sponsor her.

The Tzu Chi Foundation runs community programmes that encourage learners to adopt attitudes of compassion and care for those worse off than themselves. One such programme was about learners visiting and assisting at St Giles, an organisation that supports disabled people that is situated directly opposite the school. Compassionate intervention is one of the key moral teachings at *Good Hope School* and is grounded in a South African cultural philosophy in which giving is a central part of survival in poor communities. In this study there is evidence of such giving and sharing amongst the learners as well as the educators. Learners reported such sharing on the part of their parents and neighbours as well.

Stokvels are community based saving initiatives that are part of the self-help welfare initiatives that operate widely throughout South Africa. Learners reported that their parents used their income from stokvels to recover from accumulated debt or to assist other family members who had a greater need. Habib, Mahraj and Nyar (2008) suggest that giving in the South African context is not always about support from rich to poor communities but that it occurs in the worlds of both the rich and the poor. Indeed three chapters (2, 3 & 4) of the book *Giving and Solidarity* indicate that in poor communities giving is “crucial to their very survival” and without it “starvation, malnutrition and strife would be more widespread” (“Giving and Solidarity,” 2008, p. 26). When the poor are unable to give financially they volunteer their time. This is evidenced at *Good Hope School* through the service of the church group that runs a feeding scheme at the school every day. Everatt and Solanki (2008) submit that religion is the dominant factor informing giving in South Africa. While the feeding scheme at *Good Hope School* is run by a Christian group, poverty relief support in various forms is received from various faith communities.

4.3.3.2 Gangsterism, Sex and Drugs

A newspaper article (22 January 2013) referred to a couple who appeared in court for running a brothel in the area close to *Good Hope School*. It signalled to me once again the environment in which most of the children, and some of the teachers, live. The couple were accused of recruiting girls as young as twelve to their establishment (Broughton, 2013). The article reminded me of a

story I heard on my first day at *Good Hope School*. A school girl had been recruited by her sex worker friends to accompany them on a weekend jaunt. An extract from my notes of my informal meeting with a staff member while I conducted research at *Good Hope School* gives some insight:

Revealed a case of a girl smoking WHOONGA²⁹ and involved with friends who are sex workers. Parents got the principal to take that child back into the school. Staff member concerned that the girl will influence other learners. 'What interest can a girl like that have in school, when she experiences the life of earning R300 for every trick?' she asked.

The area around *Good Hope School* has a historical reputation of being a haven for the sex work industry. Its reputation is related to its proximity to the harbour and international trade. Leggett (1999) in his study of the sex work industry in Durban estimated that the total number of sex workers (based on the number of reported cases at the police station in the area) appeared to be not more than 1,625 women on the street in the area around *Good Hope School*. The ages of the sex workers ranged from 15 to 50 with a median age of 24 and a modal age of 22. Leggett could not accurately ascertain the numbers of underage sex workers as that industry is more covert. Many of the sex workers lived in squalid daily paid accommodation and often experienced homelessness. The buildings in which they plied their trade were described as "decrepit, noisy, smelly buildings, infested with vermin" (Leggett, 1999, p. 162). Drug abuse was rife among sex workers. According to Leggett (1999) drugs "have had a major impact on the way sex work is conducted in Durban. Much of the present 'poverty' experienced by the women - including lowered standards of hygiene and an increase in exposure to disease, violence, and property crime - can be directly traced back to drugs and drug dealers" (p. 163). Their lives of exclusion were a daily struggle for existence that increased their vulnerability to crime and poverty.

Some of the sex workers sent their children to *Good Hope School*. Most often those children were cared for by other family members not involved in the sex industry. A number of the sex workers were HIV positive and returned to their families for assistance when they were sick. One

²⁹ Whoonga is a new street drug – believed to be marijuana mixed with heroin and/or antiretroviral drugs (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whoonga>)

of the learners interviewed spoke of his mother being ill. He lived with his father and was unaware that she was a sex worker and was HIV positive.

None of the learners reported an awareness of the sex industry. Their consciousness of an alternate lifestyle on the streets was related to their fears associated with the street children. The street children conjured up images of neglect, deprivation and abandonment. They moved around in groups and were the closest this study came to an association with a gang culture. Most importantly, the street children had created a lifestyle outside of mainstream culture and, like the Amalaita gangs at the turn of the century, they instilled fear and distress in the minds of those who lived a normalised existence in homes and families. Like the Amalaita gangs, the street children are a consequence of the socio-economic and political conditions of the time.

In a submission of the National Alliance for Street Children (NASC, 2006) to the provincial legislature they cited statistics from a census that they conducted. While they said that the accuracy of their figures was not guaranteed, they contended that the majority of South Africa's street children lived in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2004, a census survey in seven localities around South Africa revealed "5,964 children in shelters, drop-in centres, and on the streets". The Umthombo Street Children³⁰ webpage maintains that the figure of 500 children on the streets in Durban has been reduced to about 200 (Umthombo). The groups that look after street children only cater for children up to the age of 16. The figures probably refer to that group.

The most popular area where street children live is around the beach area in the proximity of *Good Hope School*. Part of the group culture is that members must contribute to the group in some way. They attain cash through sex work and petty crime. They also involve themselves in legal work like "washing and guarding cars in the parking spaces along the upper promenade; begging in front of restaurants and bars; or doing chores for the street vendors selling from stalls along the promenade" (Scherthaner, 2011).

³⁰ Umthombo is an organisation based in Durban, South Africa that empowers street children and aims to change the way that society perceives and treats them.

Their drug of choice is glue. In the study conducted by Schernthaner (2011), street children complained of the one-dimensional way in which they were perceived by the public as criminals and glue sniffers. That public perception was also prevalent in the narratives of the children in this study. Like the narratives of the people from St Helena and the Amalaita gangs, the street children complained of frequently being arrested for vagrancy and loitering.

The school logs provide evidence of the existence of gang related counter-culture in the 1960s:

16 June 1961

I regret to state that Vinney James was brought to school at 11:50 am this morning by CID Mr Vorster who reported that he had discovered Vinney in the company of 'Ducktails'³¹ on the beach... Vinney was attired in a complete ducktail outfit. According to Mr Vorster, Vinney had been smoking dagga and was in the company of ducktails who were already in trouble with the law.... I hope to have him expelled from the school. He is not fit company for school children.

Such exclusionary practices support further alienation. Alienation persists in an environment that promotes difference as divisive. The Amalaita gang culture was formed in the complex milieu set in the urbanising labour market and new conditions of colonial controls. In the present, gangs are more inclined to pursue an underground existence as part of the underworld. Nevertheless, the school fears the resurgence of gang related activities that could entice learners through nationalist patriotism. Like the community, learners tended to make friendship groups based on their nationalities. A reason why gang culture has not emerged strongly in the study could be what was found by Bray et al (2010) that because of their focus on ordinary children they paid scant attention to the children who reject the schooling system and join the gang culture. In this study the children's constant reference to street children indicates the existence of a youthful gang culture. This study acknowledges that much of what we take for granted in everyday discourse cannot be dismissed without deeper investigation of the perceived reality.

³¹ The most familiar subculture associated with the leather jacket is that of the **ducktails** of the 1950s and early 1960s, such as depicted in the movies *The Lords of Flatbush* and *Grease*, as well as by 'The Fonz' in *Happy Days*, aired during the early 1970s (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/ducktails>).

4.4 Concluding Comments

This chapter has outlined the complex interrelationship between space and time in everyday life, in particular in the lives of the learners in this study. It is important to view the rhythms of time in which change contains elements of the past that create cycles of what was in new forms. The continuity of past practices in the present are difficult to comprehend until they are viewed together, rather than separately.

Chapter 5: The Multiplied Contexts of School Life

5.1 Introduction

Good Hope School, which has been in existence since 1894, had its humble beginnings in a corrugated iron house in the Durban city centre. The school was established towards the end of the 19th century when local people and immigrants were already fully under the control of the British imperial power. The previous chapter painted the picture of how the school and society at large converged, collided and co-existed within a spatial context reflected in time. The school was established as a vehicle for education to serve the interest of the British imperial power and colonial education was established as the voice of knowledge. The indigenous people, having been conquered, had become workers in the colony without any entitlement to citizenship rights. The social life of the indigenous population had been virtually destroyed and the view of the colonial power dominated.

As in the previous chapter, in this chapter I select pertinent data that explain how space and time are bound to social dynamics and power relationships. The school is analysed as part of a peculiar historical landscape that has multiple perspectives in the way it emerges in the present. Like Murray (2008), I try to “retain the detailed richness, complexity and heterogeneity of the urban experience by focussing on different parts of the story and how these separate pieces fit together into a coherent whole” (p. ix). Throughout, I look at how the past and the present relate, intersect and diverge. Complex networking of philosophical and ideological contexts; the physical spaces in which learning happens and the controls used in the daily operations of the school are brought to the fore, so that social relations are seen to be interrelated with the material and natural world.

This chapter is divided into three main parts:

1. The philosophical and ideological contexts in which the school developed to the present day.
2. The school’s spatial terrain from the multiple perspectives in which the school is organised: the building; the grounds; the rooms.
3. The rules, behaviour and controls that the school uses to guide learners through their experience of education.

5.2 Good Hope School: Ideological/Philosophical Contexts

Firstly, I look at the segregation of education from colonial times to the present and consider how new forms of separation impact on the learners who attend the school. Next, I explore the Christian context that survives to the present day. I then delve into language across time and particularly consider how language policies influence and limit the choices parents and learners make.

5.2.1 Segregated Education

At about the same time that *Good Hope School* was established a new Education Act (No. 5 of 1894) came into existence. Control of public education was placed in the hands of a minister of education. As the colonial population grew, government education showed a marked expansion. *Good Hope School* became a government controlled institution in 1898 – four years after its inception (Vietzen, 1973).

By the end of the 19th century Robert Russell, superintendent of education from 1878 to 1901, boasted about British imperial rule while attending the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in London:

Our little colony of Natal may be said to have existed since the beginning of our noble Queen's reign. When her majesty ascended the throne the streets of what is now the capital of Natal were occupied by the huts of the native races, and the streets of our seaport, where we now have dozens of schools whose attendance ranges from 700 downwards, were then the haunts of the elephant and other wild animals, roaming about in the primeval forests (Vietzen, 1973, p. 309).

Russell puts into context the alienation imposed on 'native' inhabitants through the establishment of the British colony.

In the period before 1994 the basis for education of those not 'white' was for the provision of cheap labour and therefore had a bias towards manual training. The education of 'white' children prepared them for dominance. In 1890 Sir Langham Dale stated the policy for the training of 'white' children "to maintain their unquestioned supremacy in this land" (Jaffe, 1988, p. 166). Rhodes, in 1894, called for African education to be based on manual work. In 1919, a Commission on Native Education proposed that local authorities run segregated African education. The 1935-1936 Inter-Departmental Commission on Native Education reported as follows: "The education of the White Child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the

education of the Black Child for a subordinate society” (Jaffe, 1988, p. 166). In 1951 the Eiselen Commission drew up a complete plan for *Bantu Education* based on and extending some of the policies outlined above and thereby entrenched the idea that education was primarily to serve the labour market. Tabata (1979) quotes M.P. Maree, chairman of the Permanent Commission of Native Affairs, speaking during the debate of the Bantu Education Bill, to sum up the ideas supporting the bill:

... functionally the Native must fill a role in the community different to that of the European, and in the second place, that the Native has a different cultural background from the White man, and in the third place that the Native must fit into his own type of community, a different type of community to that of the European. Therefore the fundamental idea in Bantu Education must be that he should be taught to.... become a worthy member of the Bantu race instead of having to be a synthetic Westerner.' (Hansard, V. 101953)

When the Nationalists took power in 1948 the basis for their policies had already been established. When they introduced Bantu Education its purpose was not only to enforce dominance over indigenous people but also to subvert the notion of cultural pride and entrench tribal divisions for the purposes of control. It is my view that the different tribal cultures were seen as a way of fragmenting and subjugating the indigenous population. Verwoerd considered assimilation into western norms as subversive and dangerous. Tabata (1979) quotes Verwoerd:

. . . Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze (p. 12).

Verwoerd sought to socially engineer the African people away from the modern society back into tribal norms and practices. The Bantu Authorities Act reorganised indigenous people into tribal groupings in areas set aside as reserves. Indeed, even in the cities people were uprooted and reorganised into such tribal groupings.

While it can be argued that much of this history is well known, its reiteration here is important for bringing to the fore the savage attack against education. The legacy of apartheid is often skirted over as an unfortunate moment in our past that must just be forgotten and be done with. I contend that much of what we experience as inequalities prevalent in education today is related to that very repugnant past. It continues still in complex forms in the present stratified class-based schooling system.

The next section outlines the inequalities that are prevalent in the post 1994 period.

5.2.2 New Forms of Segregation in Schooling

In chapter 4, I outlined how the poor are marginalised by a new form of segregation that forces them into smaller areas in the city centres while the better off are protected in beautiful urban spaces. This is also true for schools as the majority of former ‘Model C’ schools cater for an elite group of middle class learners in fortified sites around the city while previously disadvantaged township schools and the recently transformed schools like *Good Hope School* survive with meagre resources and poor security.

Though *Good Hope School* is a former ‘Model C’ school with a history steeped in colonialism and racial apartheid, it presently does not support the values represented by most former ‘Model C’ schools in Durban. Consequently, it is perceived as an underdog by its former collegial fraternity of ‘white’ only apartheid schools. A reason for this is because of its open admissions policy in the post 1994 period of transformation. As the demographics of its surroundings changed, the school opened its doors to all the new members of the community. As intimated in the previous chapter, many ‘white’ people deserted the area and moved into citadels on the fringes of the city but those who could not afford to move remained and their children continue to attend *Good Hope School*. As the city has become a haven for migrants from all over Africa, the school has taken in the children of those families and at the time of this study 40% of its population was from the migrant community.

Good Hope School is, and has been, a reflection of its society. As the living standards of its neighbourhood have deteriorated, the school has suffered similarly. At the time of this study, approximately 80% of the children attending the school did not pay school fees. The school did not get sufficient funding from the state and relied on uncertain donor funding for its survival. Due to financial constraints it has had to downgrade many activities and make difficult choices about what is affordable and necessary. By making those choices it no longer has the infrastructure it once had.

The school now resembles a functioning township school of the disadvantaged more than it resembles its former ‘Model C’ fraternities. While former ‘Model C’ schools increased their school fees as a way of survival or of maintaining standards, *Good Hope School* has remained in

a financial bracket that is intended to be more affordable for those enrolled there. Exorbitant school fees exclude poor children.

Fataar (2009c) describes township schools as “social reproduction incubators that entrap young people in place” (p. 10). The learners of *Good Hope School* are subjected to many of the inequalities and indignities suffered by township schools in spite of being an inner city school. While the learners may live in the city they do not possess the “urban imagination and requisite literacies to access the city’s educational, occupational and leisure spaces” (p. 10) that Fataar speaks of. They too develop “limited repertoires” (p. 10) like their counterparts in the township school. However, the school does have a symbolic reputation as a better performing school due to the historical legacy that continues to define it as such.

Good Hope School, unlike the majority of South African schools that have an inherently segregationist spatial context, has a unique, very distinctive geography that more aptly reflects the newness of the South African space. Demographically *Good Hope School* is a fair example of what a South African school should look like in the racial profile promoted by the state. However, the school attracts mostly poor learners from the flat dwellers who live in the newly degraded spaces close to the school. Children who live in the new upmarket millionaire residences do not attend *Good Hope School* even though it is right on their doorstep. This is indicative that the school is perceived as a degraded version of a former ‘Model C’ school. However, from the perspective of parents who send their children to *Good Hope School*, it is more upmarket than ordinary township schools. A number of children travel from the townships to attend school there. Unlike many teachers at township schools who do not let their own children attend the schools at which they teach, because they are regarded as of a low standard, some teachers at *Good Hope School* have enough confidence in the school to have their own children attend there.

5.2.3 Poor Financial Support

As stated previously, the government does not support the school in the way it supports poorer schools. As a former ‘Model C’ school, it receives minimum benefits from the state, unlike schools defined as quintile 1 or 2 that are deemed to be ‘no fee’ schools.

Quintile one is the most poor quintile, quintile two is the second-poorest quintile, and so on. Each national quintile encompasses one-fifth of the learners enrolled in public ordinary schools (NASC, 2006).

It is through privatisation of education and exorbitant school fees that former ‘Model C’ schools have recreated themselves as havens of excellence that both mirror and surpass the past. They mirror the past in the way they conduct their education mandate in the old colonial style and surpass it by having up to date resources and infrastructure that ordinary government schools cannot even dream of. For instance, while *Good Hope School* struggles with outdated computers sourced from various donors, its better off counterparts have the latest technologies, like smart boards, and unlimited internet access.

The system of introducing ‘Model C’ schools as fee paying semi-private institutions has evolved over the years as a consequence of the government’s decentralised policies that have placed financial control into the hands of parent controlled governing bodies. The new system desegregates schools but also leads to new forms of separateness through religious and class control. Religious bodies are at liberty to run schools that are predominantly for particular religious groups and through the introduction of systems of fee paying, schools limit admission of children who are unable to pay the required fees. This is in spite of state policies that prohibit this practice. Schools are by law required to admit children who live within a certain distance from it. As Lemon (2004) intimates:

Whilst there is an obligation to admit children for whom the school is the closest to their home, the widening of the school's feeder area tends to increase the number of applicants from whom it can choose (p. 272).

Some schools have found innovative ways to ensure that children admitted into their schools pay school fees. I know of a school that removed a gate and replaced it with a wall to increase the distance to be measured from the poorer areas from which it did not want to accept learners. Another way in which the policies are circumvented is through the process of interviews of prospective learners and their parents, as well as credit-worthy checks on parents. Parents who are analysed as not being able to afford the fees are usually excluded. Very few parents appeal against being declined admission. As Chisholm (2005) states, we now have “a two-tier system in which social class is a major factor in determining who is included and who is excluded” (p. 217).

Marketisation of education is a global phenomenon that emerged following the dismantling of welfarism in Europe (Chisholm, 2004a). In South Africa, the argument for the introduction of school fees because it would “forestall a flight of the middle class to private schools” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004) resulted in education becoming a “consumer good” (Soudien et al., 2001, p. 79). It is arguable that the fee policy keeps middle class learners in public schools. The commodification of education has entrenched a “state of almost permanent subordination” for poor black people (Soudien et al., 2001, p. 80).

The South African government has, through its equity policies, redirected state funding to the poorest schools. The Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) took effect on 1 January 2000 and explains, amongst other things, the exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees (Motala et al., 2007). The Education Laws Amendment Act requires a list of schools designated ‘no fee schools’ to be drawn up annually. In 2012 the Minister of Education declared Quintile 1 to 3³² schools (60% of public schools) to be ‘no fee schools for 2012’ (*South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No 84 of 1996) Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding*, 2011). *Good Hope School* is not a beneficiary of this new dispensation and remains a struggling fee-paying school with little chance of sufficient additional support from government.

5.2.4 Burdening the Teachers

Schools that are able to offer high standards of education and produce exceptional results have enormous resources at their disposal. *Good Hope School* cannot rely on its parents to regularly pay school fees or on the government to provide more than it has allocated according to the funding classification of the school. As has been previously stated, “the majority of learners cannot exercise choice to have access to better-resourced schools” (Motala, 2009, p. 199). *Good Hope School* is a prime example of how the inability of parents to meet their fee obligations has crippled the administration of the school and forced them into the additional, often uncomfortable roles of seeking donations and fund-raising.

³² Quintile 1 represents the poorest schools while quintile 5 represents the least poor schools.

During this study, I observed the principal and teachers at *Good Hope School* constantly urging learners to pay their school fees. Learners who did pay were given rewards to show the school's appreciation and to encourage other learners to do the same. The school conducted various fundraising events throughout the year. Instead of administrators focussing on the task of education, they were forced to prioritise the school's financial survival. Teachers also took on a great number of administrative responsibilities, compromising the time spent on teaching.

Figure 11: Teacher signing relief roster

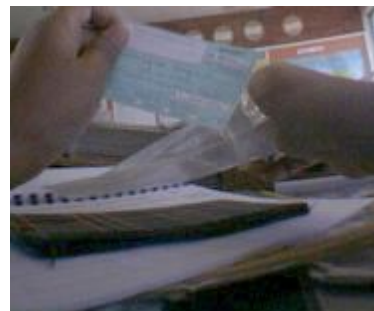


Figure 12: Teacher issuing a receipt for school fees paid



Figure 13: Teacher collecting and counting money

Not all staff members received their salaries from government. Those who did not were dependent on the school generating funds in order to pay them. This included administrative and support personnel. All the teachers gave of their time after school hours (including weekends) in order to conduct fundraising activities. Often when government paid personnel at the school have retired they have not been replaced. This was the case with the librarian, who retired at the beginning of 2011. Even though the school required a full time counsellor or social worker, it could only afford a part-time counsellor who was prepared to work for the uncompetitive salary on offer.

In addition to being pastoral caregivers as described by Fataar (2012, p. 12), teachers at schools like *Good Hope School* dip into their own funds for the smooth running of their classrooms as well as to occasionally assist indigent learners.

5.2.5 The Christian Philosophical Context

During the 19th and most of the 20th centuries the aim of education was essentially religious. According to Vietzen (1973), “All learning prepared for and culminated in confirmation, for which an ability to read and understand the Bible and its history was the chief qualification” (p. 5). This is supported by Malherbe (1925) who states that all education “was religious education” (p. 183). The religion referred to is Christianity. There was a total disregard for the possibility of any other religion.

At the turn of the 20th century, Muslims and Hindus practised their faith in some very public processions that were observed with disdain and contempt by British settlers. *Muharram* (called ‘Coolie Christmas’ by the colonists) was the first communal Indian ceremony to be observed in Natal and attended by indentured workers (Vahed, 2002). The indigenous African religious practices were likewise condemned. The assimilation of the African population through education and by instilling the dominant psyche of the colonial Christian ideology is referred to by Hey (1961):

... the trend that would be duplicated in hundreds of reserves throughout the Union of South Africa--first, settlement; next, the painful development of Christianity, often transmuted by local ancestor worship and other tribal beliefs; then, the establishment of schools and the gradual undermining of the authority of the chief and the substitution of an educated elite that continues to threaten the traditional order and way of life (p. 112).

Education was the primary means by which traditional life was disrupted and alternative colonial belief systems were normalised. Majeke (1986) expounds on the purpose of education. She contends that education served to enslave the minds of a conquered people. She explains the “insidious effect” of subjugation on the minds of those who are conquered:

Now if a ruling minority can enslave the mind of the people, control their ideas and their whole way of thinking, they have found an even more efficient weapon for subjugating them than the use of force, the military and the police. For then the people themselves assist in their own enslavement. If the rulers can make the people believe that they are inferior, wipe out their past history or present it in such a way that they feel, not pride but shame, then they create the conditions that make it easy to dominate people (Majeke, 1986).

Good Hope School was immersed in its own British educational, cultural and social life. It had a particular understanding of its purpose and developed its strategies around established British norms in the field of education. In Vietzen's (1973) investigation she found "a remarkable similarity between the ideas and attitudes surrounding girls' education in Natal and those typical of the responding period in England" (p. 8). The recordings of the school logs as well as the imperialistic views of Superintendent of Education Robert Russell referred to earlier, support this assertion. All important events and celebrations of the British Empire were the acknowledged events at the school.

The strong Christian ethos established in its long tradition as a British colony continues to the present day. When I asked the principal in an informal discussion about this she sighed and commented, '*They have been very patient with us*'. Her reference was to the teachers and students who were not Christian but tolerated the Christian prayers and teachings.

I asked one of the Muslim teachers how she coped in such an exclusive Christian environment. She responded:

The majority of children in the school are Christian, the majority. The ethos of the school is Christian based but it embraces all religion. But I know, a teacher spoke to me once and she said, you know at assemblies, they only sing Christian songs, right, so I must tell you what Mrs Moffat and I do. ... When I came to school I said, there's so much to do, there's so much to help the children and I said I was sent here because this provides me with opportunities to do good work and help children and that's how I see it right? And when we came here, I know some teachers were saying like, "Oh, more Christian based". And in the assemblies all Christian because I think this used be a Model C School, and there were only white children, before they opened to all cultures. So what we do? And Jesus was one of our prophets as well - we have to acknowledge him - and also, you know when there's Christian songs, ... we just devote it to Allah. But one or two teachers did find ... Now there was a very - you know Mrs Lather ja she's very spiritual and she doesn't like all those songs and everything. So she used to chant her beads. ...I think if she could help it, she didn't want to be there.
...

It is not just the teachers who have had to put up with the stress of participating in Christian prayers. The children were powerless to intervene and forced to do as they were told. At an assembly that I attended, one day, a teacher was very unhappy about the poor singing. She yelled at the assembly of grade six and seven learners, "*I wish God can strike you for disrespecting him*". The learners obliged with a crescendo of loud singing that satisfied the teacher and she calmed down. I noticed that even Muslim learners sang the Christian hymns.

As is evident in the language issue addressed hereafter, practises from the past have continued uncontested despite changes in the policies of the state. The choice to change has been left with the school authorities.

5.2.6 Afrikaans at an English Medium School

Alongside British culture were strong elements of Dutch influence. This is evidenced throughout the school logs by the prominence given to Dutch and later Afrikaans. As *Good Hope School* was steeped in the spatial realities of the British Empire it is to be expected that English dominated as the language of instruction and communication. It is surprising therefore that Dutch was an important component of the school's language instruction from the early years of the 20th century.

On 5th December 1910 the principal recorded: "384 English children and 3 Dutch children attending this school" (School logs). An inspection of the Dutch classes was conducted on 23rd March 1915. Dutch inspection was a regular feature in the principals' logs. At times they were recorded by the principal and at other times the inspector wrote directly into the log book. The Afrikaans inspector reported with regularity that the teachers were not good enough. The inspectors provided in-depth analysis of lessons and feedback to the school and teachers that expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching of Dutch/Afrikaans. Much blame was placed on the teachers and teachers' views appeared largely disregarded. The inspector's views recorded on 3rd February 1929 indicate how problems were analysed and particularised to Durban:

Mr Hugh (the Afrikaans teacher) contends too that the antipathy of the pupils towards Afrikaans is militating against rapid progress. He was advised to treat the subject as interestingly as possible and in that way to counteract what antipathy there might be. Mr Hugh appears to be too hasty. He wants everything to be as he would like it. He must however remember that conditions which are the result of decades of history will not disappear at short notice as if at the waving of a magic wand. Afrikaans teachers in Natal and Durban in particular, require tact, patience and perseverance, and their efforts will be crowned with success.

Many of the entries indicate the importance the authorities gave to the Dutch language. Good pronunciation and neat writing were considered a significant educational value. There was a great deal of criticism with regard to planning, the keeping of records and the lack of appropriate materials and resources. The teacher's views highlighted in the above report are significant since

there was clear antagonism to Afrikaans yet it survived then and continues to exist in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Afrikaans has continued to be a subject taught at *Good Hope School* and, because of a historical negative attitude toward Afrikaans, it has continued to face many of the difficulties spoken of over the years. In spite of that, it is once again gaining in prominence in KwaZulu-Natal as former 'Model C' schools replace Zulu with Afrikaans because it is said to be easier to learn. This was reported in *The Mercury* (Jasson da Costa & Jansen, 2012). While the debate around the prominence accorded to Afrikaans continues, the Basic Education Department's new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements "dictate that only one first additional language will be offered" (Jason da Costa & Jansen, 2012). Schools opt for Afrikaans even though it is a language spoken by only a small group of people in KwaZulu-Natal. This policy militates against nation-building and the much-talked about social cohesion among the different population groups, especially in a province where 80% of the population uses Zulu as a first language (N. Turner, 2010). *Good Hope School* is one of the few schools that has offered Zulu as a third additional language. According to a report in *The Times*, the Minister of Education intends to pilot a project to introduce African languages as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 (Masombuka, 2013). This could raise further language debates in the future.

5.2.6.1 Additional Languages in the Post 1994 Period

The sentiments expressed by the inspector about the teaching of Afrikaans in 1929 could well be that of an inspector in the present day. I observed teachers of both Afrikaans and Zulu struggle to motivate learners during lessons. Learners went through the motions of doing as they were told but showed little interest in the lessons. Teachers taught both languages through the medium of English, and many learners did not understand when the teacher addressed them in Zulu or Afrikaans. Only first language speakers of Zulu were able to respond when addressed in Zulu. The rest of the learners copied verbatim and were unable to work independently as their knowledge base was very limited. With the exception of the first language Zulu speakers, learners spent much of the lesson copying material provided by the teacher with little evidence of understanding.

This raises very important questions about the continued emphasis on Afrikaans and the inadequate standards of Zulu for first language speakers of the language. The primary justification given for the continuation of the status quo is financial. Schools make use of the personnel on their staff and do not employ experts as they cannot afford to do so. Typically there is competency within the existing staff body to teach Afrikaans but not Zulu. Schools also use the argument that academic standards should be maintained (Chick, 2002). The argument for the decline of standards is rooted in a belief system that equates high standards with an English colonial discourse:

... our findings suggest that the pervasive decline-of-standards discourse positions the canons and middle-class norms and ways of expressing these as markers of excellence, and other behaviours as threats to excellence. In other words, like English-only discourse, it serves both *naturalising* and *stigmatising* functions. By such means it helps maintain existing power relations, providing those with an acquaintance with the cultural experience reflected in the canons and middle-class norms with an advantage in the educational realm (Chick, 2002, p. 472).

The learners who attended *Good Hope School* spoke a multitude of languages. Lana explained:

Interviewer: ... *So do you speak any language besides English?*

Lana: *Swahili, Lingala, a bit of French and I'm learning Zulu and I'm learning Afrikaans*

Interviewer: *That's a lot of languages ... And which one is your favourite language?*

Lana: *Swahili*

Interviewer: *You speak that mainly at home?*

Lana: *That's the only language we speak at home*

Many learners spoke, but could not read and write, their home languages. For instance, respondents Philele and Penny, who were born in South Africa to Congolese parents, admitted that they only knew a smattering of Swahili. They said that their younger siblings knew even less as their parents encouraged them to speak English. Zulu speaking learners were forced to learn Zulu as if they were second or third language speakers. Separating Zulu speaking learners for first language instruction would be an added burden to the school finances. Turner (2010) supports the view that financial constraints are largely the reason that schools are unable to implement the Department of Basic Education's drive for multilingualism.

In a recent court case against Durban High School³³ the principal gave evidence that introducing Zulu as a first language subject would polarise the learners into language camps that would militate against the non-racial programme the school promoted by having mixed classes (N. Turner, 2010). However, here too it appears that the threads of the past prevent the school from making radical changes with regard to appropriate language choices that support the needs of the learners.

Alexander (1999) is concerned about the unacceptably low levels of competency in language, particular amongst those in the lower socio-economic group. He asserts that the class positioning that accompanies language competency cannot be ignored. The political forces at work ensure that ordinary people do not gain sufficient competency in the language of dominance to enable them to compete on a world stage. Alexander (1999) avers that those in power “cynically deny the realisation that for the overwhelming majority of ‘their’ people, the type of proficiency in the relevant ... language that would empower them is actually unattainable under present conditions” (p. 11). He ascribes the main stumbling block as a “lack of political will” (p. 11), compounded by socio-economic realities that leads to the further stratification of society and the marginalisation of indigenous languages.

When parents make the decision to encourage their children to be competent in English to the exclusion of their mother tongue it is directly related to the class mobility and greater opportunities they associate with competence in English. It is about recognising that those in power possess a language competency and ease of communication denied to those who are unable to communicate in English. Many parents have chosen *Good Hope School* because it has had a history that has given it status as an English medium environment.

Important to this study is also how language choices impact on the school experiences of the learners. Language choices are not only about the language itself but the attitudes and assumptions that are taught indirectly through a hidden curriculum. Language acquisition is

³³ In 2008 a parent brought a case to the Equality Court against DHS for not offering Zulu as a first language or alternatively as a second additional language with the same status as Afrikaans (N. Turner, 2010).

accompanied by other messages, stated and unstated, that form and shape the identities of the learners. It is about how English dominates, to the linguistic and cultural disadvantage of English second language learners. The assumption of language deficiency ignores the social, cultural and cognitive abilities of the learner placed at such a disadvantage. Alexander (1999) advises:

... in a plurilingual country, it ought to be axiomatic that the languages of the citizens should be seen as assets or resources to be used in the most effective manner for the full development of all the people.

Whilst English serves as a unifying and international language at the school, the dominance of English does place other languages at a distinct disadvantage.

5.3 Good Hope School: Space and Place

In Chapter 4 the space bordering *Good Hope School* and the living space of the learners was analysed. The introductory sections of this chapter focused on the historical, ideological, philosophical and educational context in which the school operated. In the following sections, the physical space of the school is considered. As indicated in the theoretical framework of this thesis, “Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 86). The school space is studied in parts to facilitate an understanding of the utilisation of school space in order to unpack how the complex social relationships that emerged through them were constructed. One gets varied pictures of the school depending on the perspective through which one views it. Firstly, I outline an overview of the building. Next, I look at indoor and outdoor spaces. Finally, I discuss the classroom - the physical space where the learners spent most of their time.

5.3.1 Overview of the Building

... the school building was to be a mechanism for training. It was a pedagogical machine that Pâris-Duverney conceived the École Militaire, right down to the minute details that he had imposed on the architect ... a fourfold reason for establishing sealed compartment between individuals, but also apertures for continuous surveillance. The very building of the École was to be an apparatus for observation, the rooms were distributed along a corridor like a series of small cells... (Foucault, 1991a, p. 172)

Good Hope School building is divided into three main sections: the administrative block, the senior school and the junior school. It now also has a preschool section that was opened in January 2012. The original building replicates some aspects in the design to which Foucault

alludes. The classrooms are repetitive cells along a long corridor. The divisions enable disciplinary control so that anyone out of place is easily identifiable. The original design of clear visibility has been changed and new additions now obscure and provide hiding places for those who do not want to be seen. What Foucault (1991a, p. 200) calls the trap of visibility that aided disciplinary control has been replaced by greater compactness and reduced visibility thereby decreasing that kind of disciplinary control. The greater compactness is a consequence of expansion in a limited space. The opening of a much needed preschool has further decreased the space available. Unprecedented growth in recent times due to the burgeoning population in the area has put strain on the available space needed for expansion and development.

During the period of time that I spent at the school, I observed that surveillance was assisted by an intercom system through which messages could be easily conveyed to the whole school. Central control was in the administrative block. The primary means by which discipline was maintained, in the now constricted space, was through a system of reporting those deemed out of bounds. There were clearly designated areas for particular age groups. During class time learners required written permission in order to leave their classrooms. Informal policing of corridors and questioning of those found out of the classroom ensured a level of disciplinary control.

Throughout its history the school has managed the space and the allocations allowed by those in authority. The size of the school has fluctuated over its history. At times it has had excess space and at other times (as at present) it has been overcrowded. On 24 January, 1948, the new school building was occupied even before it was fully completed due to the urgent need for more space. For many years the school operated from two separate spaces.

In the period before 1994, however, the school struggled for survival and was threatened with closure because of a drop in the school learner population. I was told by the principal, who was a member of the staff at the time, that it was not altruism that motivated the school to open its doors to all races in the 1990s but the practical reality that the school population was declining and if they did not find an alternative clientele it would have to close altogether. As previously explained, the school's feeder area had been reduced as 'white' people moved out of the area. Prior to adopting an open admission policy many of the classrooms had become storage spaces.

The school leadership decided to open those classrooms and admit children from other 'race' groups.

Parts of the building were old and somewhat dilapidated. There were many examples throughout the school of buildings beginning to decay as the school could not keep up with the many repairs that were needed. While I was in the classroom one day the force of the wind broke a window pane in the classroom. My notes about the incident read as follows:

... The teacher threatens anyone talking will get two demerits each. The class quieten down. The teacher tries to assist learners who are fixing the window. She asks learners to call Mr Marshall to help as it is a losing battle.

...The window appears to be holding as it is no longer banging in the wind.

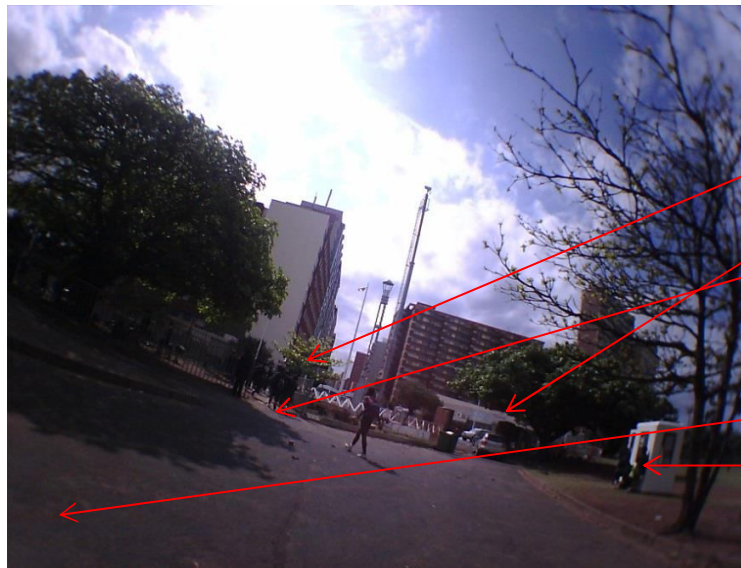
... The time is 11:50. The troublesome window suddenly crashes and breaks. It is lucky nobody got hurt. The class is disrupted, but learners fairly calm. I went forward to help. Managed to assist by tying two windows together. If an adult had taken charge previously the window might not have broken.

The incident followed many days of learners trying their utmost to keep the window closed because of the cold weather. It was mere chance that no learners who sat directly under the window were injured. Below is the picture of the window (fixed with ceiling board) as it remained until I left the school at the end of the term (Figure 14). No further repairs were made beyond the temporary closure of the window with a board. The incident happened in the second week of the third term.



Figure 14: Window pane fixed with board

The school was protected by a boundary wall that ensured a fair level of safety for those inside the walls. It also served the purpose of restricting movement from the inside to the outside. There was one pedestrian and motor gate that allowed entrance into and exit from the school.



Pedestrian gate
Entrance for vehicles
Towards teacher car park
Sentry house for security guard
Visitors' car park

When learners left or arrived at the school there was great congestion at the pedestrian gate. Learners crossed the road in front of cars in the car park and I witnessed several close shaves as learners inside the school premises crossed or ran in front of vehicles unexpectedly. The police were usually on duty on the road outside the school to help learners cross the road safely. On days when the police did not arrive teachers took over the duty.



Figure 15: Learners crossing the field and car park towards the gate after school

Learners' rights to safety and security are protected by the constitution and relevant legislation. However, research indicates that “ schools are not safe and secure and that the perpetrators of violence at schools come from within and without the schools” (Masitsa, 2011, p. 164). *Good*

Hope School took precautions to ensure a safe environment in spite of the problems of crime evident in the area where it was located. As found in other studies, the school's good relations with the community and the police contribute to greater safety (Harber, 2001).

5.3.2 Outdoor Spaces

Learner responses to the questionnaire indicated their desire for large open spaces for play during break times. For learners, break time was the only time (besides the physical education lesson) that they had the opportunity to be physically active. In their responses on the questionnaires they cited the playground as the place where they had the most fun. Blatchford, Baines and Pellegrini (2003) state that break time "is one of the main 'open' settings with more degrees of freedom and more opportunities to interact with peers" (p. 481). This was particularly so for the learners in this study who lived in confined spaces in flats where they were not allowed to freely explore spaces outside their homes. During unstructured break time learners could freely explore and participate in physical games. This study has found that even in that restricted space of the playground (further reduced to just the basketball court during the upgrade of the field) boys, in particular, loved to run around playing chasing games or kicking a ball around whilst girls mostly sat around in conversation groups. My findings are in keeping with the study conducted by Blatchford et al (2003) who found that "boys were significantly more likely to be involved in ball games, and girls in more conversation, sedentary play, jump skipping and verbal games" (p. 491).



Figure 16: Boys run around on the playground while girls sit in groups

In the playground setting I noticed many behaviours that were different than those displayed in the formalised classroom space. On the playground children more openly chose friendship groups that were national, racial and gendered. Boys, more than girls, associated with their own nationalities and spoke their own indigenous languages. Racial friendship choices were more apparent amongst girls. During vigorous physical play boy groups were mixed across race and nationality. Older boys were less physically active. A few engaged with older girls in private conversations. In this space, informal learning was mediated through both the physical surroundings and the social relationships.



Figure 17: Children on the playground



Figure 18: Upgrade of the playground/sports field

*The sports field
upgraded in 2011.*

*On the left is the
building (in progress)
of the preschool that
opened at the
beginning of 2012.*

*On the right is the
existing library. Murals
on the outside of the
library were painted by
the school children.*

The trees in the



Figure 19: Basketball court



*High rise upper class
apartments*

*Netball courts used as
playground for the junior school*

Figure 20: Netball courts used as a playground for the junior school

In their responses, learners cited places that they never went which included darkened corridors, areas under the staircases and places behind the school, which were described by Ike as places where children had sex. Most children cited the place where ‘naughty things happen’ as the toilets and a place under a bridge that joined two sections of the school (Figure 21).

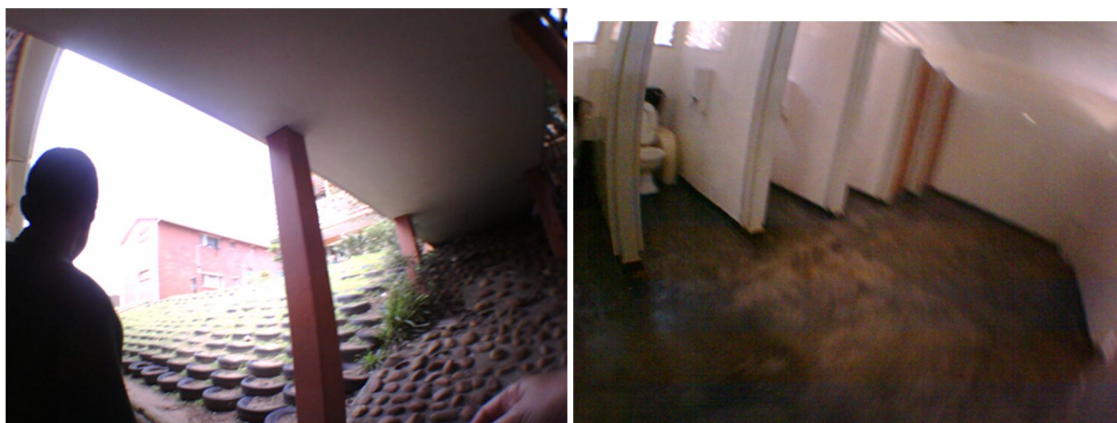


Figure 21: Cited by learners as places where naughty things happened

Thirteen learners identified the toilet and seven the field (playground) in response to the question that asked about a place at school that is not safe (question 9). In their study Astor, Meyer and Pitner (2001) found that locations that students perceived to be unsafe tended to be places that lacked adult supervision and monitoring. This study concurs with that finding as all the places the learners regarded as unsafe were areas not monitored by teachers. However, learners indicated they got bullied just about anywhere in the school. Places mentioned most often were the toilets, the playground and the fenced-in passage leading to the exit pedestrian gates. Bullying appeared to happen even where teachers were on duty.

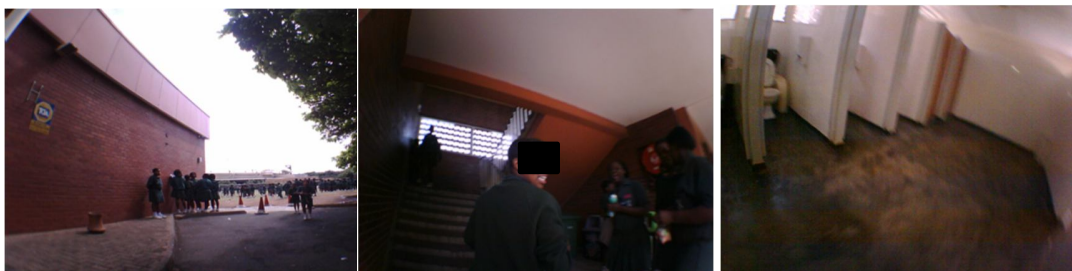


Figure 22: Places where there are secrets



Figure 23: Places where learners say they never go

Learners chose pictures of the playground to indicate areas where most fights happened. This fits in with the reports from the past when children were involved in fights that the principal recorded in the log book. Fights mostly happened on the playground or on route to and from school. Below are examples of the numerous reports of physical violence logged a little over a hundred years ago:

23 October 1906

..... throwing stones before school time. Cut severely just above eye – child taken to hospital by teacher. Cut sewn up then taken home. Sent both boys home with note

12 May 1909

Mrs came to complain of Striking her daughter so that child's mouth was too swollen for her to attend school. Enquired and concluded it was done accidentally while boy was fighting another in play hour.

Teachers on duty acted as deterrents for fights but children found places away from the direct view of those on duty. Aggression on the playground has been linked to overcrowding. Griffith (1997) found that schools with fewer students also had fewer discipline problems. High levels of aggression from some learners at *Good Hope School* could be related to this notion.

5.3.3 Indoor Spaces

The hall and the computer and audio visual rooms were places where learners had different experiences to the routine of the classroom.

The computer room was the favourite room for most of the learners. It was a large room that had a variety of very old computers. Probably received as donations, they were carefully controlled by the computer teacher as any kind of abuse would render them unworkable which would be a significant loss.

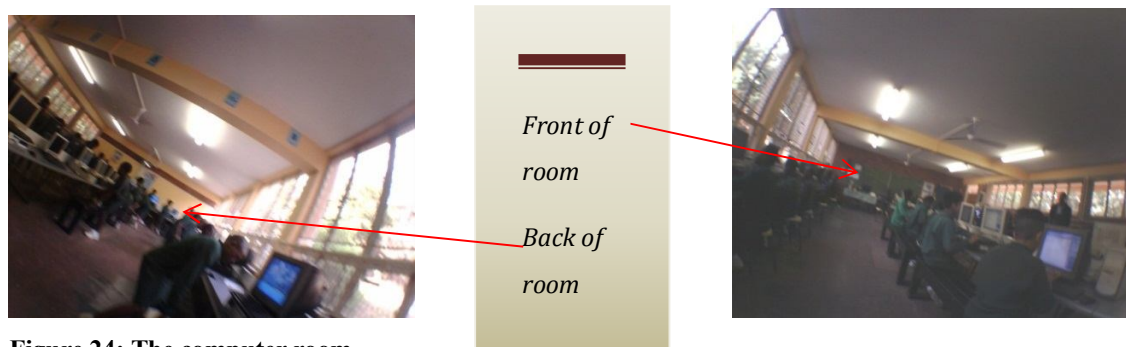


Figure 24: The computer room

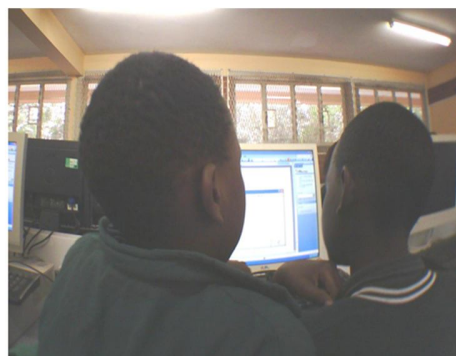


Figure 25: Learners share a computer



Figure 26: Learners working at their computers

Responses indicated that learners associated the computer room with good feelings. Learners eagerly attended computer lessons and participated actively. Due to the fear of learners damaging computers, they were under constant surveillance and worked under the close supervision of the teacher and were discouraged from exploring independently. It has been found that learners learn better through computer games than they do in an ordinary classroom setting. For instance, when comparing their motivations while learning in the game-based learning environment and in their traditional school environment, Tuzun, Yilmaz-Soylu, Karakus, Inal and Kizilkaya (2008) found:

Students demonstrated statistically significant higher intrinsic motivations and statistically significant lower extrinsic motivations learning in the game-based environment. In addition, they had decreased focus on getting grades and they were more independent while participating in the game-based activities (p. 1).

In the situation described above the teacher became the guide and manager rather than lecturer. At *Good Hope School* the teacher's role was constrained to continuing to be a lecturer that compromised the free learning experience that could happen. The caution from Roschelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordin and Means (2000) that "the mere presence of computers in the classroom does not ensure their effective use" (p. 76) rings true. However, the importance of protecting the school's meager resources was of paramount importance.

The hall was a central venue that could accommodate large numbers. It was located at the entrance to the school building and served as a buffer to other parts of the school. However, since the population of the school was so big only two grades could be accommodated in the hall at a time. The Grade Six classes were partnered with the Grade Seven classes for assemblies. When the whole school assembled the junior and senior sections took turns on the field outside.

Learners indicated in the slide presentation that the hall was both a place of good feelings and bad feelings. The good feelings were associated with prayers and the bad feelings with arriving in the hall for assembly (Figure 27). When they arrived in the hall learners were generally disciplined by teachers to be quiet and behave in a dignified way. Good feelings were also associated with acknowledgement from the principal during assembly (Figure 28). The photographs and responses from learners indicated that the school assembly was the place where discipline was strongly enforced. It was perceived as the place of the highest authority in the school.

Figure 27: Arriving for Assembly



Figure 28: Principal acknowledges learners' work at assembly

During line up on the playground (Figure 29), before learners entered the hall, disciplinary control was loose and learners were reluctant to comply with teachers' requests for straight lines and silence. However, the moment learners started to move towards the hall the discipline improved (Figure 30) and they generally conformed to demands for silence and followed instructions for particular seating arrangements with little resistance (Figure 31).

Figure 29: Loose control



Figure 30: Learners straighten lines

Before and during assembly in the hall there were pockets of resistance evidenced by whispering and occasionally overt disobedience on the part of a few children (Figure 32). This was symptomatic of the “continuous circularity of power played out between children and adults” that “decentres traditional understandings of power as possessed by adults and exercised upon children for the purpose of domination” (J. Pike, 2008, p. 417). From my observations it was clear that by the time children have reached Grade 6 much of the training for behaviour is already established. The rituals of standing, sitting, greeting, praying are all automatic actions children have been trained to do as soon as they enter the school space.



Teachers on either side of the hall are positioned to maintain discipline.

Figure 31: Quietly awaiting start of assembly



Openly talking

*Slight tilt of the head as learner
whispers to a friend*

Figure 32: Pockets of resistance to disciplinary code



*Grades Sixes leave the hall line
by line*

*Grades Sevens await
instructions to leave the hall.*

*Teacher (mostly out of picture)
supervising discipline*

Figure 33: Learners leave the assembly in orderly lines

School assemblies are places where time honoured traditions are upheld. In an article by Heller (1936) assemblies were portrayed as places where “friendliness, tolerance, and respect for authority are somehow acquired” and where if properly directed, the assembly, “furnishes life situations, unifies the school, reveals new vocational and avocational desirabilities, interests the community, widens the student's horizon, and contributes to a more valuable citizenship” (p. 356). These values have not changed much in the years since and school assemblies continue to be places where traditional values are upheld. Smith and Smith (2013) observed the “promotion of courage, kindness, loyalty and responsibility” and found that “perseverance and resilience were often stressed in a school from a low socio-economic area” (p. 5) in school assemblies. This was evident in the assemblies I witnessed at *Good Hope School* as well.

5.3.4 The Classroom

Holland and Leander (2004) contend that “positionings are pivotal moments in which social and psychological phenomena come to interanimate and interpenetrate one another” (p. 127). I maintain that physical positioning in the classroom has ramifications for the way in which a learner’s identity develops and how learning happens. It is not only about where the learner sits but the reasoning behind the way a learner is placed in a classroom. A learner’s physical positioning is related to a teacher’s perceptions of that learner in terms of behaviour and ability as well as the learner’s ability to fit in or not. Important here too is the type of desk a learner is given and how that physical object impacts on the individual’s learning. This is in keeping with Latour’s (2007a) understanding that both human and non-human actors are important. In this instance the desk is not only a signifier of status but also relates to comfort and discomfort in the learning environment which impact directly on the way learning happens.

Around the classroom where I conducted my study, were other objects that were related to the creation of an atmosphere in the classroom that was conducive to an appropriate learning environment. There were many charts around the classroom related to work being taught as well as good behaviour and attitudes as well as a section dedicated to news and current affairs. A small library served an important purpose in the absence of the semi-functional school library.

Two pictures were chosen by the majority of learners as places where they felt safe. The first was the classroom and the second was moving towards the classroom. Rorn (1998) argues that “in a ‘safe space’ classroom, students are not isolated, alienated, threatened, intimidated, or ‘stressed-out’” and therefore, teachers who “create ‘safe spaces’ care about their students, and because they care, they eliminate the pain from education” (p. 405). The Grade 6 class teacher tried to create such a safe zone in her classroom. The question is whether children who are protected in such safe spaces are adequately prepared for surviving in the more violent surroundings of their daily living. While it is an appealing response to “the menace of an alienating world” (1998, p. 404), Rorn claims that it also censors critical thinking and creates opportunities for engagement that are not transferable into other spheres where the safe zone no longer exists. The safe zone in the classroom of this study was important for creating a space in which learning could happen. However, the violent realities of learners’ lives were not totally neutralised in the safe zone of

the classroom. Occasional aggressive outbursts, bullying and strategies to deflect learning evidenced the intrusion of outside influences into the classroom space.

Equally important to the creation of a safe zone was the assurance of disciplinary control. Teachers across the globe have experimented with seating arrangements in their classrooms in order to optimise learning and to ensure greater disciplinary control. Most educators at *Good Hope School* organised the classroom desks in rows for greater control of the exceptionally big classes, which had as many as 45 learners in a class. The formal arrangement in rows, however, tends to lead to a classroom environment in which there is less discussion and more teacher-directed learning. The classroom in this study was arranged differently, with desks on both sides and a wide aisle in the centre (Figure 35) similar to that suggested by Harrison (2011). Harrison's claim is that his configuration (see Figure 34) allows for greater open space and allows teachers to get closer to learners while teaching. A criticism of the u shaped arrangement is that when teachers are supervising learners on one side of the room they are cut off from learners on the other side of the room (Jones, 2007).

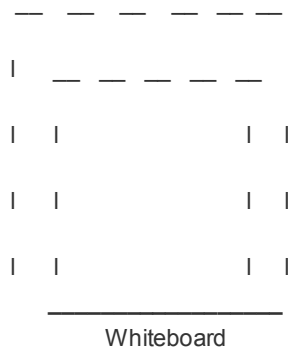


Figure 34: Harrison's Classroom Configuration



Figure 35: Aisle in the centre of classroom

Display board at the back of the classroom

Learners in single desks in the back row

Wide aisle

In the classroom at *Good Hope School*, the teacher used two double desks (see Figure 36) on each side of the classroom with one row of single desks (see Figure 37) at the back. While Harrison's arrangement was for 25 desks, the *Good Hope School* classroom seated 35 learners in a rather confined space. The arrangement of the desks ensured that, once seated, learners had difficulty moving out of their places. This enabled greater teacher control. By minimizing movement social interaction with other learners was restricted. The seats reserved for naughty children at the front of the classroom (see Figure 38), ensured the visibility of offending culprits. Separation tactics ensured that offending learners were removed from the place where they were likely to break rules to areas where they were visible to both teachers and learners, who monitored their behaviour on behalf of the teachers. Such disciplinary processes were used as deterrents to other would be offenders. However, the intention to turn the offending child into a spectacle for derision was often thwarted by learners who turned their positioning to their personal advantage (see Figure 38).

Figure 36: Double Desk



Figure 37: Boy in single desk; books on vacant chair

A rule the teacher called a golden rule stated: *Thou shalt not leave thy place*. Children were allocated seating places and were expected to stay in those places. Teachers often moved learners around when they misbehaved. An extract from my notes:

The teacher says, 'Quiet Pops. I'm going to bring you to the front tomorrow.' Philele says. 'Thank you Miss, you saved my life'.

The teacher says Mandy will also move. Pops says he is very happy to move to the front.



Figure 38: Learner in 'naughty chair' sharing a joke

Since girls were perceived as better behaved they were seated between boys who were perceived as naughty. Friends were separated. The teacher explained, *“I moved her – they’re best friends – Philele, so they talking too much so I brought her in the front. Brought her in the second row from the back”*. The constant rearrangements resulted in new configurations in relationships that sometimes created new unforeseen problems. This confirms the notion that space is dynamic and changes constantly with the new positionings of bodies on the move. While the teacher views the learner as ‘a body in space’ what the learners experience are ‘spaces of the body’ (Lefebvre, 1991b). Nespor (1997) explains the latter as “people’s actual ways of moving around the world” and the former as “the body rendered as a visual display” (p.121). As the teacher imposes discipline through the rearrangement of bodies to entrench permissible forms of behaviour, learners are “spatially redefined” (p. 121). In the redefinition learners not only learn about acceptable ways of sitting and locating their physical presence, they adopt coded mannerism and styles as well as suppressions and abstractions from their own bodies (Fataar, 2012, p. 5).

The teacher’s exclusive control of bounded physical space is an integral part of the teacher’s identity in the school (Nespor, 1997). Willis (1977) explained how space was used to constrain learners’ bodily activity:

In a simple physical sense school students, and their possible views of the pedagogic situation, are subordinated by the constricted and inferior space they occupy. Sitting in tight ranked desks in front of the larger teacher’s desk; deprived of private space themselves.... (p. 67)

It is generally accepted that the arrangement of a classroom is important for teacher / learner interaction and impacts on the way learners receive and get involved in their learning. It has been

found that there is greater interaction with the front and centre of the classroom than there is with the back of the classroom (Totusek & Staton-Spicer, 1982). Totusek and Staton-Spicer use the term “action seats” to describe the places where learners most interact with the teacher during lessons. Jones (2007) suggests that the best classroom arrangement allows the teacher to move from learner to learner with the fewest number of steps. He also says that the further away students are from the teacher the more likely they are to “goof off” (p. 30). The effective teacher ensures proximity to the learners by continually cruising around the classroom even when learners are busy. By moving around the classroom, effective teachers “use the proximity of their bodies as an instrument of management” (Jones, 2007, p. 31).

At *Good Hope School* different teachers adopted various methods of control. Most moved around the classroom at regular intervals while learners were occupied with tasks. However, few teachers conducted any kind of close inspection to see exactly what learners were doing. Many of those closest to me were often engaged in other activities of which the teacher was unaware.

5.4 *Good Hope School*: Rules and Behaviour

5.4.1 Disciplinary Controls

Foucault (1991a) recognises how multiple systems of punishment work in places such as schools and other training institutions through various aspects of everyday life:

The workshop, the school, the army were subject to a whole micro-penalty of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behaviour (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (‘incorrect’ attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency) (p. 178).

The list that Foucault outlines conforms to the punishable behaviours at *Good Hope School*.

I share a common understanding with Boostrom (1991) that “it is in the context of everyday life that the significance of rules is revealed” (p. 195). Rules not only structure how we see the world but define our place in it. At *Good Hope School*, teachers followed the school’s disciplinary code but also created their own rules for the smooth running of their classes.

Rules and moral teachings were distributed around the walls of the Grade 6 classroom and each child had a 'Words of Wisdom' journal that was used for recording sayings that the class teacher thought helped children to develop sound moral judgement. She explained:

I think a lot of the challenges are, with most of them, they coming with all that baggage from home. And they come with all that anger that goes into their lives maybe divorced or their parents abandon them and it manifests in the classroom as problematic behaviour. That is why I started that journal. The journal thing is always to help them if they going through any problems at school, or at home. It's to help them with their problems. So I notice the biggest problem is like, before you're a teacher you have to be like a guidance counsellor. And if you get that part right, then also show them some love, and if you get them onto your side and even a positive comment. The weakest child – you get them over, but it doesn't always work. It's a bit tough.

The teacher regarded herself as a moral guide first and a teacher second. In her opinion the moral guide served to ensure that learners would follow the rules because they would be able to contextualise them in terms of the values she promoted. This view of education fitted with the philosophy of the school expressed through views of senior management and other teachers as well as the prominence given to support programmes and special assemblies in the life of the school. Raising moral teaching as paramount is not new and is associated with the vision of Aristotle and Plato. Fallona (2000) explains:

Plato and Aristotle concluded that the best human life requires the exercise of virtue. The aretai, the excellences or virtues, are those qualities that make life admirable or excellent. They focus on ideal types of human life, not on universal principles of conduct. ... (p. 682)

In the case of the particular class teacher in this study, the morals were largely about caring for the self and fellow human beings with a strong universal religious bias. The teachings also contained veiled threats of consequences if obligations were not followed.

Extracts from Words of Wisdom book

- 1. God is kind to those who are kind to mankind.**
- 2. If you do something bad you will suffer the consequences of your actions.**
- 3. If you do one good deed 10 good things are coming your way.**
- 4. If you do one bad thing 10 bad things are coming your way.**
- 5. To give is better than receive.**
- 6. A good act is Charity.**
- 7. The more we do the more we accomplish.**
- 8. Always do the right thing and God will take care of the rest.**
- 9. Everything happens for a reason.**
- 10. Revenge -- the spirit of revenge is the spirit of the devil. Do not follow the way of the devil. Love the person who tries to hurt you. You will succeed in changing his heart.**

Figure 39: Extracts from Words of Wisdom Book

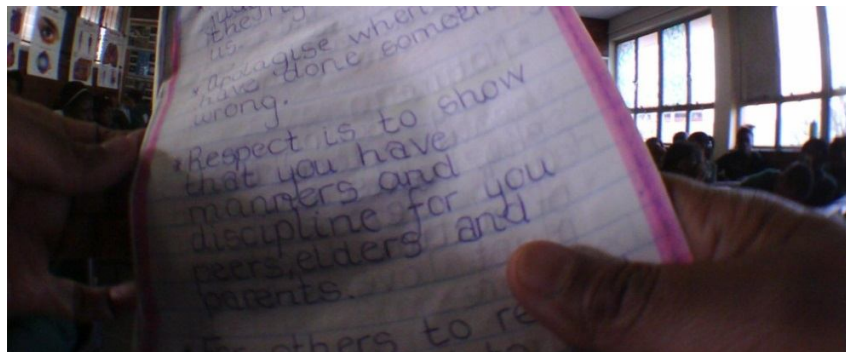


Figure 40: A page from the journal (Words of Wisdom Book)

The threatening nature of some of the sayings reflected the teacher's personal values and set of beliefs that she considered necessary for shaping the values of the learners in her care. When moral coercion failed to keep learners in line, the teacher resorted to a system of rewards and punishments. She explained:

... got some tough learners there.. Ja, initially in the first term if you came they were troublesome but then I have a lot of rules, even I get tired of my own rules and implementing them and without the rules...but also rewards as well.

For this teacher, the classroom rules were primarily there to create a controlled environment. Her rules, she believed, kept the learners in check. Frydaki (2009) explains how teachers like the class teacher in question confront their dilemmas:

... when confronted with a dilemma, teachers endorse the rules to maintain order, the one 'right' solution to every problem, and the need for students' obedience. In practice, they attribute themselves the role of controlling classroom relationships, and are easily disturbed by the lack of student discipline; they create and modify rules of their own, while their teaching strategies overlook students' perspectives or internal motives, paying no attention to the students' emotional needs (p. 122).

The class teacher at *Good Hope School* continually tried to win the confidence of her learners. Many other teachers prioritised disciplinary controls and allowed for little input from learners. This could be because their time in the classroom was limited and they did not get to know learners as intimately as the class teacher.

The class teacher was instrumental in developing friendships amongst learners. She introduced a game called 'secret buddy' to build closer ties amongst classmates. It also served a disciplinary role in that she hoped that if learners felt good towards one another they would contain their aggression. Each learner in the class was given a secret buddy for whom they were expected to do something special.

The class teacher also allowed learners to play board games as an incentive for them to finish their work. This resulted in learners moving around and being out of their allocated places. Monitors would inspect work and assess whether learners were eligible for playing board games. This sometimes led to minor altercations between monitors and learners who challenged the monitors' authority. Below is an extract from the interview with Ike who confronted Rachel, the favoured head class monitor:

Interviewer: *So what was it that you were arguing about yesterday? You said something to her, something about tidiness of the work?*

Ike: *Oh yes, about the games. I wanted to play chess. I was in a rush. Miss didn't say anything about being tidy and stuff and they say that if we finish, we have to show it to the monitors and Rachel is the monitor for the whole year...so everyone knows she didn't say anything about being tidy so she makes her own rules. I know it's wrong to make it untidy, but she was making her own rules.*

The games kept learners mostly quiet since they were busy. Only occasionally were there minor altercations. Some teachers did not like the use of board games and did not allow learners to play

even if they had finished their work. It may be that they perceived games as potentially noisy activities. They also did not want learners out of their places.

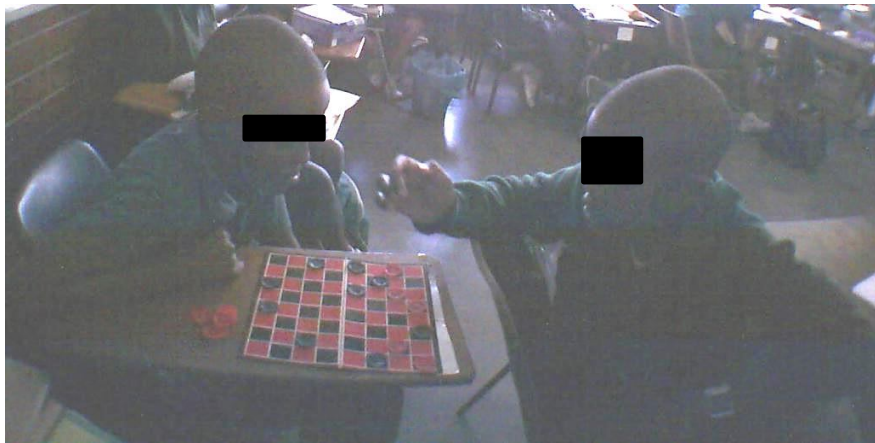


Figure 41: Learners playing a board game

Initiatives like the ones above and other innovations to the system of rewards were indicators of the teacher's commitment to fair discipline, acknowledgement of learner achievements and willingness to try out new ideas. Unexpected learner responses sometimes thwarted the teacher's innovative attempts at inclusion and good governance.

Boostrom (1991) argues that “the instrumental view of rules obscures their function as the embodiment of a way of life in the classroom” and shows that “as students embrace rules, they take part not only in short-term behaviours but also in far-reaching ways of thinking about themselves and the world” (p. 198). Learner responses could perhaps be interpreted as their attempts to reject that view of themselves. A consequence is the blaming of the teacher for poor classroom control as was noted by the inspector in the school log of 12 February 1925:

She is advised to adopt a rather firm attitude to maintain discipline as young teachers often sin on the side of leniency and discover their mistakes too late.

Again on 4 March 1926 the logs state:

There seems to be no doubt that both teachers have a lot to learn in the way of class control and school work. In both classes the discipline was weak and the fact that the children were continuously on the lookout for some disturbance or frivolity was far too evident...

Like in the past, disciplinary control was constantly being undermined by learners who showed scant regard for the measures the teacher and school had in place. An example of the scant regard

for rules considered unimportant by the learners was the way they were continuously reminded not to not sweep the classroom while lessons were in progress and warned that if caught they would be punished. This instruction was generally ignored by the learners and seldom punished by the teachers. The rule was broken a number of times each day. When learners were found sweeping teachers would remind them that if they were caught by the principal they would be punished. Occasionally teacher's would make comments like the one recorded in my observation note below:

Teacher calls class to order. Teacher reminds learners about detention. Teacher asks child several times about her sweeping and asks if she is practicing to become a maid.

Learners did not take the warning seriously and spent much of their time cleaning their desks and occasionally sweeping the floor. They sometimes even cleaned the corridor (see Figure 43). The situation was exacerbated towards the end of the day when the class teacher rewarded the row that, in her opinion, was the tidiest. Interestingly, in their questionnaires on the slide show, learners mostly indicated that the sweeping boy gave a good feeling (14 respondents chose 'good' while 3 respondents chose 'bad').



Figure 42: Learner sweeping classroom



Figure 43: Learner sweeping corridor

Surveillance and disciplinary control worked to the degree that learners believed there would be serious consequences and that their actions were visible to others.

5.4.2 The Silence Rule

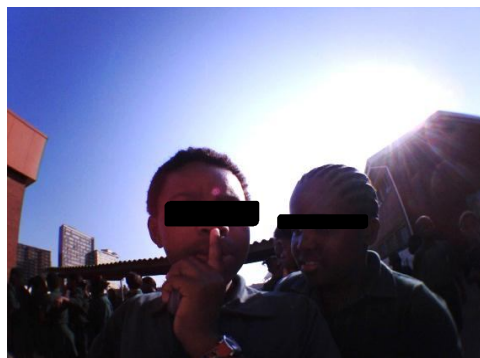


Figure 44: Finger over lips depicts silence rule

The silence rule was the single most important rule to be followed indoors. Children got into trouble most often for breaking this rule. The class monitors were mostly responsible for ensuring observance of this rule and reporting those who flouted it. In their interviews children explained that the reason they got into trouble was because they ‘talked too much’ or certain monitors did not like them and wrote their names on the board for flouting the rule.

The silence rule applied from the moment the bell rang for the start of the day to when it rang again for break time or signalled the time to go home. It was in the classroom space that the silence rule was most strictly applied. Some teachers regarded any kind of noise as flouting the

silence rule and vigorously condemned learners engaged in any kind of noise. In a note I stated, “There is a heightened sensitivity to noise and learners’ misbehaviour”. There were times when the class was perfectly quiet but the teacher would imply that someone was talking.

Silence was not just about keeping quiet; it was also about not back-chatting. Children often got into trouble for trying to defend themselves and were then accused of back-chatting. The teacher spoke about how she got frustrated by one child’s continuous back-chatting:

I have to always think of different ways in which I can handle a particular child, like Ike, I had a problem with his attitude. He was always back-chatting me, he used to talk to me in the first term, like I’m his age...A lot of outbursts. It’s like hey... I even told Mrs Thompson about him. I took him to the office once and I said, ‘Mrs Thompson this boy has a bad attitude - always fighting’.

Boostrom (1991) shares how a common awareness of a rule held the practice in place. The learners share the teacher’s vision of the rule and therefore comply with its implementation. Ike, in the instance described above, did not share the teacher’s understanding when he first came to her class and was therefore constantly in trouble for back-chatting. Through a process of rule assimilation he eventually complied and his behaviour became more acceptable. However, his reputation as a poorly behaved boy was more difficult to overcome. This was related to the school’s understanding that the breaking of the rule was not a mere “inconvenience but an affront” (Boostrom, 1991, p. 200).

The expectation evident at *Good Hope School* was that learners had to unquestioningly obey the authority of the teachers. A typical example of this relationship is recorded in my notes:

Teacher: *Those on the list must go to the office today.*

Learners: *Why?*

Teacher: *Just do as you are told.*

Learners did not think it necessary to understand the rule. It was just important to obey:

Interviewer: *What do you think you get into trouble the most for?*

Carl: *Miss, for talking and walking around.*

Interviewer: *Do you think it’s fair that you are not allowed to talk in class?*

Carl: *Miss, it is.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Carl: *Because Miss you’re not allowed to talk.*

Interviewer: *At home do you have rules of not being allowed to talk?*

Carl: *No Miss.*

Interviewer: *Why do you think it’s different at home and at school?*

Carl: *Miss, because at school, Miss, you must concentrate on working ...*

I often witnessed anger from teachers in the classroom because they felt learners were overly talkative. I noticed that they tended to pick on certain learners who were often in trouble and generally perceived as culprits when the silence rule was broken. I recorded many insulting comments from teachers about this rule. Below are a few examples (see Table 2).

<p><i>'If I find you talking, I'll give you more work'.</i></p> <p><i>'Elvin stop chatting! I'm tired of your nonsense'.</i></p> <p><i>'I'm talking here when you're talking. You're rude'.</i></p> <p><i>'He has a lot to say so we'll use him'.</i> (sarcasm)</p> <p><i>'You talk so much but you didn't learn your times table'.</i></p> <p><i>'The next child who says 'Miss' I'll give a yellow slip'.</i></p> <p><i>'Quiet man! What's wrong with you?'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm not interested in what he says; what she says; you are getting a detention because you are chatting'.</i></p> <p><i>'See what happens when you talk too much in the back? See how well you do!'</i> (sarcasm)</p>
--

Table 2: Teacher comments related to the silence rule

Very often the only noticeable criteria which the teacher used for making comments appeared to be the humiliation of the individual breaking the silence rule. Such humiliation served to warn others not to do the same. However, I will concur with Boostrom (1991) that the rule reflects the teacher's philosophical ideas about teaching and learning. At *Good Hope School* I found that a class of learners that were silent were regarded as good and those who were noisy were considered bad.

Although silence was of such importance I often noticed that children who were silent were not necessarily doing what they were supposed to be doing. They had their books opened and feigned attention but busied themselves with drawing, weaving scoobie³⁴ wire (see Figure 45 below), tidying their desks, doing homework or projects for other learning areas, writing notes to

³⁴ Scoobies: Long, thin bits of soft plastic tubing that you plait and weave together. Come in metallic, neon, and clear glittery colours (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=scoobies>).

one another, paging through self-made song books, filling in the class imitation 'Facebook' page and playing games.



Figure 45: Scoobie wire and woven designs



Figure 46: A learner wearing a scoobie wire decoration

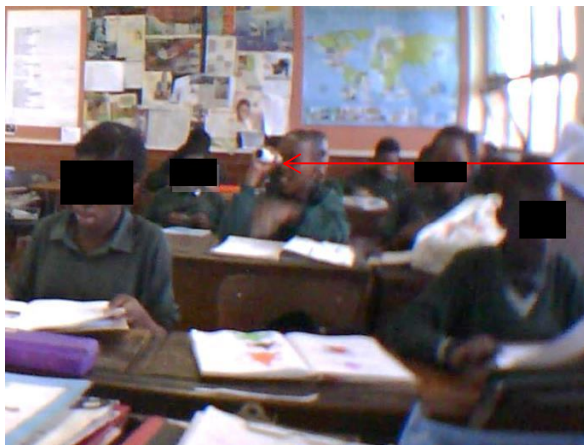
Many of the teachers banned the scoobie weaving during their lessons and learners secretly continued to weave under their desks. Some teachers were selective about who they reprimanded for playing with scoobie wire. The usual naughty culprits were more likely to be reprimanded. An excerpt from my notes from my first day in the classroom shows this:

The time is now 8:30.

I am watching Neliswe. She is female. She is writing from the board. Her body is half across her desk.... She holds a pencil in her left hand. She wears a colourful watch. She scratches the back of her head. Rubs her little finger. Rubs her hands. Puts books in the desk as a teacher comes in to teach Zulu. Opens her book. Has Scoobie wire in her right hand. Starts plaiting the Scoobie wire. Teacher approaches as she continues with Scoobie wire. Boy next to her is irritated. Teacher says nothing. Does not seem to notice Neliswe who continues to plait Scoobie wire. The teacher introduces a new section. Neliswe is still plaiting. She sits right at the door and appears almost invisible.

The learner who became invisible was the one regarded as well behaved. Other learners who were reprimanded for this activity were generally considered poorly behaved. The class teacher was more tolerant of learners weaving during her lessons but warned learners not to do it in other teachers' lessons. After the holiday break the scoobie wire fad had stopped.

It appeared to me that the silence rule had been somewhat subverted by the learners themselves. The teachers were happy that learners were quiet and only discovered much later when they inspected books that some learners had not done the work. The learners were content that they could do as they pleased as long as they obeyed the silence rule.



*A learner plays with self-made
toy eyeglass while the rest of
the class works*

Figure 47: Differently occupied

I had the distinct impression that learners seldom listened to teachers. They used the silence rule as a way of feigning attention while they got on with their own business:

Teacher talks but class appear to be carrying on with their own things. It is almost like the teacher is talking to herself with children in their own world. They suddenly wake up and respond to teacher's questions/comments by shouting out.

Learners also often ignored teachers' instructions (Figure 47). Teachers repeated instructions several times before they got responses. Teachers were in the habit of repeating themselves because learners did not respond to instructions the first time and often asked teachers to repeat the instruction:

Children don't respond to instructions even if they are repeated several times. E.g. the music lesson: the teacher told them to write their names about 20 times yet a learner sitting in the front row did not write his name.

The time is 11: 54. Mr Govind instructs learners to put away A & C, but learners do not respond. Teacher tells them the same. Few respond. ...

The time is 11: 57. Mr Govind again tells learners to put away A & C. More respond. Ike still drawing. Mr Govind hands out worksheets. Ike closes book before Mr Govind reaches his desk.

Some teachers were able to continue with teaching even when learners showed little interest in what was being said (see Figure 48).

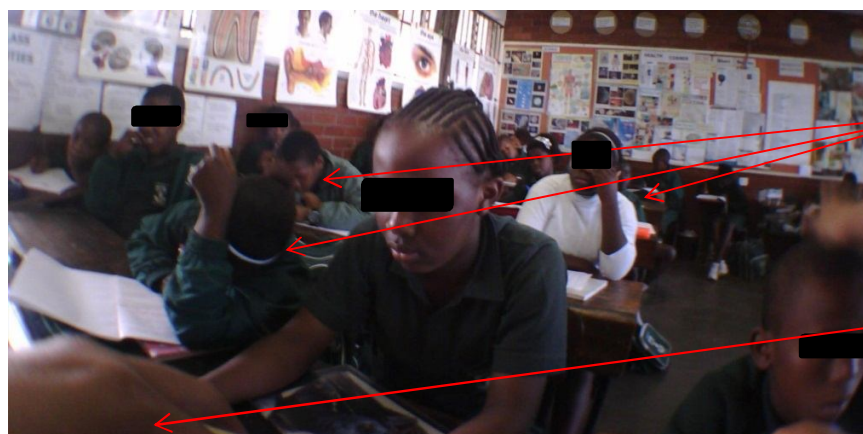


Figure 48: Learners during lesson.

Learners appear not to be paying attention during a lesson.

Teacher's hand shows she/he is positioned on the teacher's left side of the classroom facing learners

The silence rule sometimes extended to not embarrassing the teacher by pointing out mistakes the teacher had made. I witnessed this on many occasions when learners conceded to the teacher's incorrect answer rather than try to prove their own answer right.

An instance of embarrassment occurred when a student teacher made spelling errors on the board. The following is taken from my observation notes:

Class laughs as student teacher spells needle as 'niddle'. But they do not see that mechanic is also incorrectly spelt.

Argument about who said the student teacher must 'go back to school'. She says everybody makes mistakes. The argument continues amongst the learners.

The student teacher calls out Pops to take over the lesson because she thinks he is the one who has been disrespectful. He is the one who corrected the spelling mistake. Once he has been humiliated because he is perceived as disrespectful, the student teacher sends him back to his place.

In order to re-establish herself as the voice of authority, the student- teacher felt it necessary to belittle the one she perceived as threatening her position. Intricate interrelationships of control and silencing of learners are shown in this incident.

The silence rule was often broken by object noises. These included: tapping/drumming pencil or other objects, tapping feet, rattling or tearing paper, dragging chairs and slamming desk. The tapping noises could continue for a long while and teachers had great difficulty in finding the culprits responsible unless one of the learners reported them. The noises were often rhythmical and reminiscent of rap music accompanied by rapping undertones when learners felt in the mood. My observations:

Tariq and Ike having a chat and they drum with pens and make rhythmic guttural noises. Tariq has words written on the page and Ike drums the rhythm. Shows approval.

Learners could continue tapping for long periods of time and only stopped when noticed by the teacher:

Siyabonga tapping his pen on his desk for 4 minutes. Rest of class copying down work from the board. When the teacher tells class to stop fidgeting and do work Siyabonga sits back with his hands on his head. [Still not working].

In the classroom environment it was preferable that he sat with his hands on his head than tap unrelentingly. It appeared that the silence gave the teacher greater peace of mind.

During my time at *Good Hope School* children often put tape over their mouths to stop themselves from talking (see Figure 49). It was probably a kind of game with serious overtones that reflected their distress at being caught chatting. In one instance the teacher noticed the learners who had taped their mouths and remarked '*Good. Now you won't talk*'.



Figure 49: Learner with mouth taped

In a similar game, learners made masks to cover their faces in childish attempts to disguise their identity. Some teachers were contemptuous of the games and made insulting comments about approval in appearance.

Other verbalising that broke the silence rule included: carrying on conversations with other children when it was not permitted; answering the teacher without raising one's hand or without being called on; making comments or calling out remarks when no questions had been asked; calling the teacher's name to get her attention and crying, screaming, singing, whistling, laughing, coughing, or blowing loudly. All were regarded as inappropriate behaviour and were punished as the teacher deemed appropriate.

The commonplace silence rule has great implications for learning. Teachers sent ambiguous messages about silence and speech since speaking was only allowed within the learning context with the teacher as the only legalised speaker (Bosacki, 2005). In building the foundation for literacy Fisher, Frey and Rothenberg (2008) suggest: "English language learners need access to instruction that recognizes the symbiotic relationship among the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 9). They are critical of teachers who rely on "telling" as a way of disseminating knowledge because they say, "telling does not equate with learning" (p. 9). The idea is to support and develop students' thinking rather than just use talk as a way of checking comprehension. They recognise speech as the representation of thinking and therefore suggest that classrooms should be filled with talk since the expectation is that classrooms should be filled with thinking.

In an analysis of five minutes of teacher student interaction, Fisher et al (2008) found that the teacher used 190 words to the 11 words the student used. While the teacher used academic language, none of the words used by the student had academic content. They conclude that "these students will fail to develop academic language and discourse simply because they aren't provided opportunities to use words" (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 8). They also contend that in classrooms where there are increased numbers of students who live in poverty, teachers talk more and students talk less. When learners use English as an additional language, English speaking teachers ask them easier questions or do not ask them any questions at all. This could

explain Alexander's (1999) assertion (alluded to earlier) that learners from deprived socio-economic backgrounds have poor language skills.

In addition to teachers' dominating classroom talk, Fisher et al (2008) note that teachers rely primarily on questioning to check students' understanding. The question style of initiate-respond-evaluate only allows one person at a time to respond and the teacher assumes a general understanding in the class from one correct response. In the process, learners do not get enough dialogue time as their responses are often one word or short answers that do not give an opportunity for full sentence construction or any kind of analysis. Students learn the patterns in the teacher's style and become caught in the cycle of "guess what's in the teacher's head" (Fisher et al, 2008, p. 10) or they become "disengaged as they listen to the 'popcorn' pattern of teacher question, student response, teacher question, student response" (p. 10). The above findings concur with what I noticed in the classroom space at *Good Hope School*.

The silence rule compromises the verbal interchange necessary for learners to develop oral and conceptual learning skills. The dominance of teacher talk in lessons at *Good Hope School* is both an indication of low expectations on the part of teachers and the acceptance on the part of learners of their positioning as listeners rather than talkers in lessons.

5.4.3 Corporal Punishment

In the past, corporal punishment was legal provided it was properly conducted according to specified regulations and recorded in the school's log. When teachers did not follow due process they were reprimanded, as is evidenced in a few selected extracts from logs that span many decades:

15 October 1917

..... And his brother came to complain that had inflicted corporal punishment upons hind quarters. I have notified that assistant teachers are only allowed to administer corporal punishment in the presence of the head teacher.

11th November 1949

Mrs Megane reported to me that her son John Megane had been struck on the head by Mrs Daniels the Afrikaans teacher. On 17 August I warned Mrs Daniels about striking children on the head

13th February 1961

It is with regret that I had to reprimand Ms Warner for striking a pupil on the head with a ruler. I pointed out to her that this was illegal and that she should not teach with a ruler in her hand.

In the present time the banning of corporal punishment, challenged in the constitutional court, has been upheld. Yet, many teachers continue to use this form of punishment. At *Good Hope School* some teachers have been reported for using corporal punishment. Ms Hendricks, the class teacher, told me of two teachers who were reported by children in her class for beating them. In individual interviews one child told how one of those teachers swore at them. Below is an extract from the interview with Khanya:

Khanya: *My favourite thing is when miss (the class teacher) is there at the class. I don't like when there's other teachers. Sometimes he shouts and it hurts my heart and then sometimes I just forget it and he has a right to shout at me because I did wrong.*

Interviewer: *So, when she shouts at you, you don't mind*

Khanya: *No miss, I don't mind*

Interviewer: *But when Ms Jennings shouts at you, then you do mind?*

Khanya: *Miss, cause Ms Jennings swears us.*

Interviewer: *What kind of swear?*

Khanya: *Like hey you Miss, says this ... uhm ...you filthy pig, you fuckin moron, says all this stuff*

Interviewer: *Really?*

Khanya: *Yes Miss.*

Interviewer: *... then what happens when she says that?*

Khanya: *Miss, we just say, 'How miss, why you say this...' And then she says, 'What?'*

Interviewer: *She says it loud or soft?*

Khanya: *Loud Miss! When she's shouting at us*

I did not witness such behaviour myself nor did any other learners report such behaviour from any teacher. Learners generally did not like teachers who shouted at them. However, like Khanya, they said that they could understand why teachers did.

I attended an assembly in which the principal addressed the children about their poor behaviour. She was of the opinion that the children had been receiving too many privileges and as a result their behaviour had deteriorated. She showed them a cane that used to be used for punishing children. She told them that since neither she nor her teachers could use corporal punishment, she would call in their parents to give them a hiding if they misbehaved. On that day teachers used the principal's message to threaten children and make sure they behaved. One of my notes read as follows:

Teacher inspects Pops's book. She says his book is blank. He has lost all his worksheets even though she gives him two. She will send him to the principal and he will be given what the principal promised this morning.

The hankering back to the past and the belief that it was a better time is what makes the school reflect uncritically on methods that it believed worked. Yet all the principals' log entries indicate

that strict rules governed the use of corporal punishment and it was by no means the panacea for all ills as is implied in present day discourse. Like the attitude to Afrikaans and to Christian teachings, alternatives are only addressed as a way of placating the authorities and not because there is buy-in from the school. Desperation to make the school successful and overcome multiple difficulties results in short-sighted, short term solutions.

5.5 Concluding Comments

Findings outlined in this chapter continue the theme of how the past and present intertwine in complex ways. The school is positioned as a product of its past. This impedes its project of re-inventing itself in the new context in which it exists. Strong indications of fighting for survival in an area deprived of an infrastructure conducive to a normalised life create opportunities for new ways of being. However, constraints emerge because of financial limitations that lead to a permanent mode of crisis management, discordant positioning in the new dispensation, limited foresight, and the inability to break out of traditional dominant discourses of power. Within the safe bubble that the school is, complex relationships generate the space for learning. Learning is compromised by forces often beyond the immediate control of the school as learning is mediated through the dissonant spacialities and positionings of the learners in the school and home environments. The networks that emerge indicate links between established norms and practices from the past to the present as well as changed positioning of learners and teachers in the relationships that have developed. What is perceived as a whole is held together by complex relationships defined by values steeped in history and mediated through both physical space as well as the rules for discipline evolved over generations in the school environment.

Chapter 6: The School Experiences of the Learners at *Good Hope School*

6.1 Introduction

As my intention is to unravel how learners experience education, learners are central to this study. The previous two chapters contextualised the experience of the learners at *Good Hope School* in the community and at the school. This chapter answers more directly the research questions:

1. *What are learners' day-to-day experiences of school life at a school that regards itself as poor?*
2. *Why do those learners experience school life in the way they do?*

The chapter is inspired by the work of Fataar (2012) who explains that “there is a need for scholarly attention to the interaction between the emerging social contexts of education, on the one hand, and the specific educational, learning and pedagogical exigencies of young people in institutional settings, on the other” (p. 2). Since I delve into learners' experiences of education, the thesis is mindful of the complexities situated in the social context in which the learning emerges. Previous chapters intimated that while the school has a symbolic and historic reputation as a better performing school, learners receive an inferior education compared with that received in more advantaged schools. This binds learners into a circular relationship of inferiority. This chapter continues this line of argument and reasserts that classroom learning is a consequence of both the pedagogic practices of teachers, teachers' content knowledge, and the transfer of educational legacies through teachers and institutions as well as the social realities in which learners live. While specifically located in the classroom, learning is impacted by a multiplicity of factors.

This chapter positions the learner in the multiplicated contexts of school and social life by looking at relationships, the environment and the everyday. I reflect on those everyday practices that contextualise the learning experience at *Good Hope School* and contribute to the multiple layers and networks of the learning experience. Actions have reverberating effects on both the

immediate and the larger environment. Learning is mediated through the relationships that develop between the actants. The parts of the school system are interrogated to reveal what happens at the level of the everyday and seeks to explore the complexities in those relationships. While from the outside the school appears to operate as a coherent whole, the examination of its various parts bring to the fore the tensions that exist.

6.2 Positioning the Learner

The learners discussed in this thesis shared a Grade 6 classroom space at *Good Hope School*, which has been shown to be a disadvantaged environment. There are a multiplicity of factors that have impacted on their learning and the way in which they have experienced school life. Within each factor selected for discussion are myriads of networks that emerge in complex ways. In the analysis that follows I try to make visible the way learning is compromised in an environment where normalised practices in the classroom and school deny learners the opportunity for equitable education.

On the surface, the learners presented a uniform identity as Grade Six learners in a particular environment. However, social realities add different dimensions to the way learners receive their learning. For instance, Ike, Andy and Sammy were three boys in the same class and of the same age. They received the same tutoring, they all liked school and all attended school regularly. However, their home realities were very different from one another. Ike, a Congolese boy, lived in chronic poverty; Sammy, a Muslim South African boy of Indian descent, experienced such poverty when he was abandoned in Cape Town by his desperate mother but now lived in relative comfort (albeit with largely absent parents in a flat shared with a sister) and Andy, a Zulu speaking South African orphan, was forced to live with relatives whom he disliked. All three boys brought different realities to the learning environment. In the classroom the teachers perceived each of these three learners differently. Ike was considered a rebel (the teachers thought he may be involved with gangs – this he denied but acknowledged that he saw merit in knowing the right people). Andy was nurtured because he was an orphan. And Sammy was regarded as a good learner. The three learners related in particular ways to their classmates and had status earned through the way their peers accepted or rejected them into groups that operated

in the classroom space. Amongst Congolese boys Ike felt accepted and was full of bravado related to his perceptions of Congolese masculinity as celebrated in his community. He said, “*People know these Congolese people are like fighters.*” Sammy and Andy were regarded as weak by other boys in the class. Andy overcame this through his imaginative involvement in *Dragon Ball Z* while Sammy distanced himself from other boys and called them “hooligans”.

Both Penny and Lana were female learners of Congolese extraction. They were both very poor. Penny lived with both parents while Lana lived with a single mother. Both lived with members of their extended families and other boarders who assisted the family financially. Their poverty defined their self-images but Lana developed strategies through which she was better able to mediate her poverty. Penny stressed about not having things. Lana took greater initiative and borrowed books from the library to improve her knowledge and to display her greater interest in school subjects to her teachers. She was street savvy and had no compunction about asking for money. She had developed a repertoire of excuses that made her look good. While teachers were vigilant about her streetwise confidence, she was quick to tears and capable of making herself worthy of compassion.

From the above descriptions it is clear that a focus on the ‘child as social being’ is important. The question is how the ‘child as social being’ translates into the ‘child as learner’. Much of what happens in the classroom, school and surrounds militates against learning or produces a different kind of learning. Fataar (2012) uses the word *suppression* as “a referent for a situation where one type of spatial practice serves as a kind of constraint or suppressor of other positioning practices in the same domain” (p. 3). In his study, he found that with regard to suppression, “the school and specifically classroom laminating practices have come to suppress the four students’ [in his study] learning positioning practice, which is based on complex learning assemblages brought from their domestic environments” (p. 3). He is quite categorical that the child as social being cannot be separated from the child as learner. In addition, those multiplied social contexts have direct bearing on the way learners learn or the way their learning is undermined. As Fataar (2012) expounds, “Social relations are a key mediator of learning” (p. 2). It is clear that the children included in this thesis are complex embodiments of environmental, social, class and school realities that create the circumstances in which learning

happens. The child learner must be viewed within the context of the exteriorities that create the reality of his/her life.

There is a common understanding that learners' identities both influence their environments and are shaped by their schooling. Schools transform learners through an ontological approach that not only changes what the learner knows but who the learner is (Wortham, 2004). The difficulty lies in unravelling the complexities in that process. I use the idea of laminations to make visible those hidden realities in the learners' schooling experience.

Lamination is a metaphor used by Fataar (2012) as well as Holland and Leander (2004) to "describe the hybrid social/psychological entities created by positioning" (p. 131). Holland and Leander give credit to Donald Brenneis as the first user of the metaphor. According to Wikipedia lamination is:

... the technique of manufacturing a material in multiple layers, so that the composite material achieves improved strength, stability, appearance or other properties from the use of differing materials. A laminate is usually permanently assembled by heat, pressure, welding, or adhesives (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamination>).

Metaphorically, the laminations are the layers not immediately evident as the learners go through the process of learning. Each layer contributes to learning suppression or reception in multiple ways. As Holland and Leander (2004) intimate, the layers retain some of their original distinctiveness, but in a different configuration. The idea of lamination fits in with Latour's explanation of networks (the laminations) that incorporate both human and non-human actors. Over time the threads of the social, the cultural and the personal layers become thoroughly intertwined (Holland & Leander, 2004). Through the processes and contexts a new persona emerges enriched with or entrapped by the particular schooling experience.

After entering the school environment of *Good Hope School* learners typically adopt the persona normalised and promoted by the school discourse and teaching practices. While historical factors are concealed in everyday practices, their layering into the school's persona is an indelible part of the learners it produces. Learners' identity development is therefore inextricably bound to school learning. As the socio-historical patterns adapt and change over time, so too do the identities of the learners in the school environment. However, part of those adaptations and

changes are steeped in historical realities intertwined with the immediate spheres of influences, such as the ontogenetic categories of identity that circulate in the school (Wortham, 2004).

With adherence to the metaphor of laminations popularised by Fataar as well as Holland and Leander (alluded to earlier), I introduce the idea of a veneer that is the visible persona produced by the school. The veneer hides the multiple layered networks produced during the lamination process. This is why the school is able to present itself as a good school. Hidden behind the veneer are the complex problems it faces on a daily basis to maintain the outer coat of respectability and excellence.

The veneer is also reflective of the learner. Hidden behind the veneer of a learner who twangs like a 'Model C' product, is a learner who experiences a different education as his/her language is marginalised. While at school, poverty is hidden behind a uniform dress code and treatment that recognises a common humanity. Hidden too are cultural contexts, language barriers, racial and gender stereotypes as well as social problems.

An important aspect of the veneer for both the school and the learner is the positive protective armour it provides in attempting to cope with, as well as normalise and standardise, an authentic schooling discourse in the prevailing difficult socio-economic environment. The dreams and aspirations of the school community, as a whole, are visibly apparent in the veneer projected.

For learners, the veneer validates their identity as well as their sense of self-worth inside and outside of the school environment. The stronger the veneer that the learner develops, the more likelihood there is of successful assimilation into the normalised discourse of the school and society. A fragile veneer, on the other hand, can lead to greater conflict between the school and the learner, as well as a possible loss in coping skills for the further education required in order for learners to break out of their wretched class positioning and cycle of urban poverty.

Below is a table (Table 3) that represents my interpretation of the veneers of excellence that conceal the layered networks of laminations that ultimately serve to suppress learning.

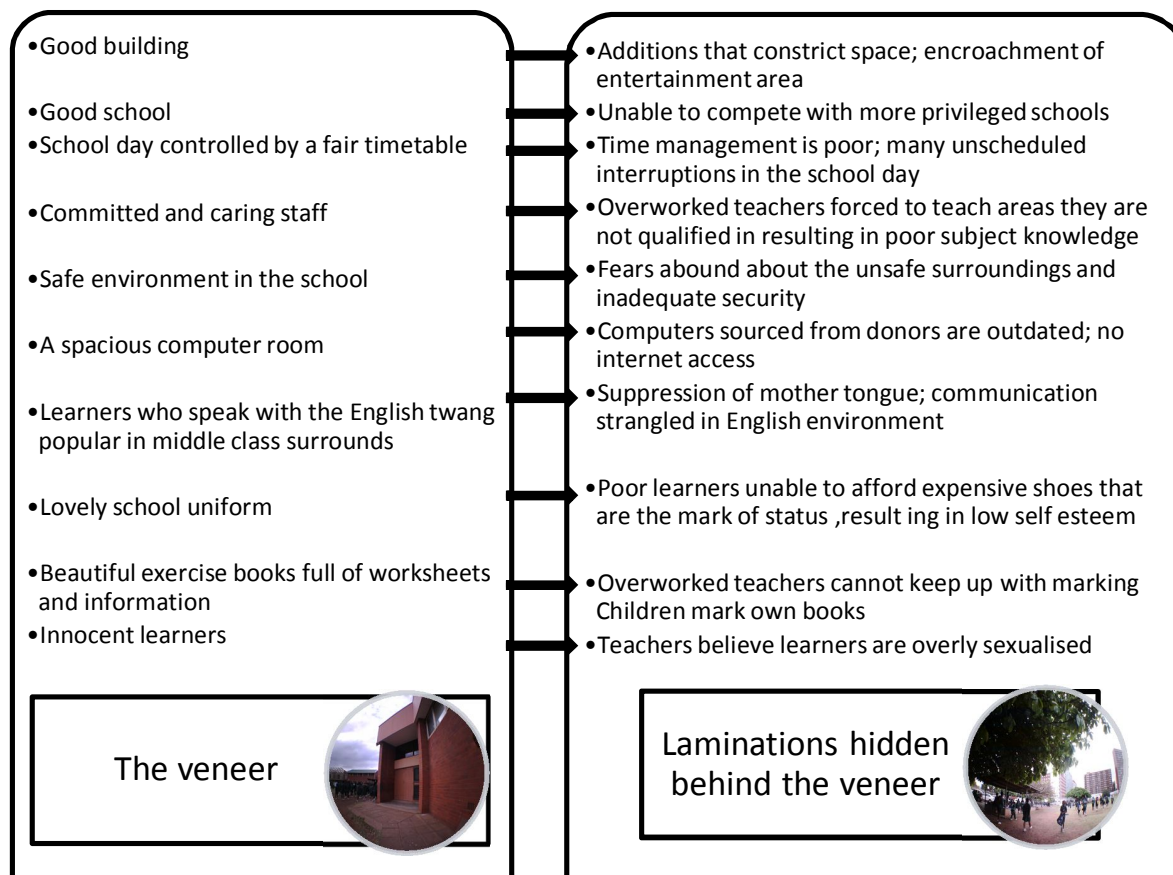


Table 3: Representation of veneers of respectability and suppression of learning

6.3 Hierarchical Controls in the Learning Environment

Throughout this thesis I have made selective references to the relationship that I witnessed between teachers and learners at *Good Hope School*. The fundamental relationship was that of the child as subordinate. Teachers expected learners to obey them at all times and demanded that learners show them respect as senior members of society. Whenever learners deviated from this expectation they were dealt with severely. As the parameters for obedience and respect were not clearly defined, however, it was frequently up to the individual to make a value judgement. Under such conditions even a look could become grounds for an accusation of disrespect. As intimated in the previous chapter, learners learn from the time they enter the school how to manage the relationship between themselves and their teachers. They learn through a system of

rewards and punishment what is allowed or punishable. The relationship between teachers and learners is controlled through the principal and the school's management team. Important also are teacher practices in lesson presentation, assessment styles, time management, disciplinary controls and cultural contexts.

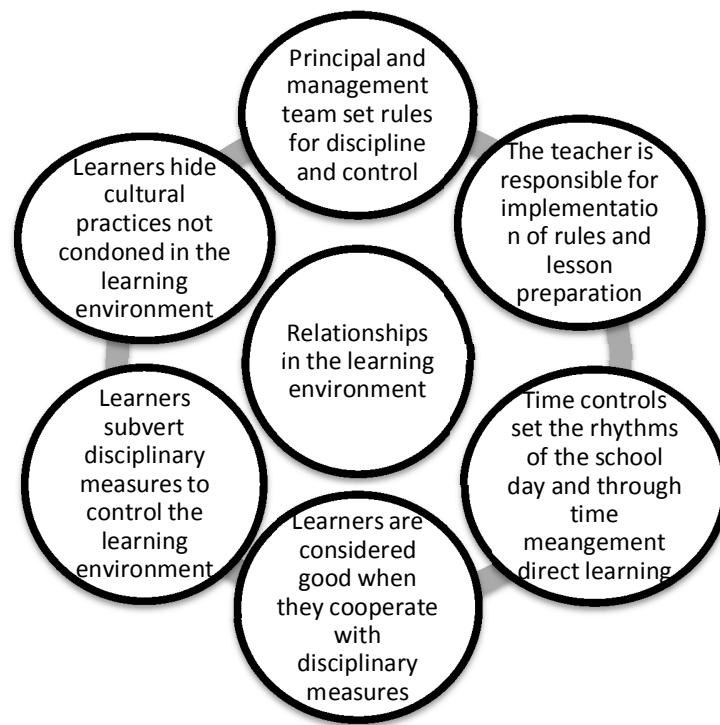


Figure 50: Relationships in the school environment

6.3.1 The Principal and Management Team

At *Good Hope School*, the principal's positioning gave her a powerful place from which she could dictate realities for both learners and teachers. As the most respected member of staff she directed the school environment, staff and learners. Her voice carried the authority of her position and as she entered the hall at assembly that profound respect was evident in the demeanour and attitude of teachers and learners alike. There was total silence when she spoke and immediate acceptance from learners when disciplined. Her educational responsibility was significantly curtailed due to the administrative and financial responsibilities that accompanied her role in school management. Her deputy in the senior school had a quieter demeanour and,

while respected, did not command the same status as the principal. Respondent 2 reported an opinion that she thought was representative of some learners' views about the deputy principal:

Lana told me – listen to the conversation of children - I was sitting after to school, and they normally sit with me to help clean up the class. And Rachel, you know Rachel, _____ 'Miss', (she talks like a big lady) 'I can't imagine the school without Mrs Thompson. Mr Mathe is too quiet. The children will eat him up'.

The contrasting styles of the two leaders reveal how discipline could be compromised by perceptions of weakness of those in authority. Learners easily take advantage when they discern breaks in the veneer of authority. The principal and the management team were the senior, final voices of authority. Learners mostly experienced them in a symbolic role and only those who had exhausted localised disciplinary measures faced the might of the ultimate discipline in the form of HOD³⁵ detention or arbitration by the management team. If that authoritative role was compromised, the threads that tied the school's discipline together could fall apart. The cooperation of teachers and the management team held the threads together to ensure the authority of the top management team was not compromised. Support for disciplinary controls and measures ensured the smooth running of the school.

By maintaining a functional learning environment through the efforts of a dedicated staff and management team who worked against tremendous odds, the school's reputation as a good school had attracted the attention of the Department of Basic Education in KwaZulu-Natal which used it as a beacon for visiting principals from rural areas. The management team had been co-opted to assist the department in their attempt to support rural based schools.

The participatory system of school management requires the principal to devolve responsibilities to the management team and away from the old style of the principal as chief (Steyn, 2002). However, since schools change slowly, the principal is still given the status of overall manager and has to balance the role of manager (overseeing finances and administration), with supervising the academic programme and being the chief disciplinarian of learners and teachers. While teachers carried out the daily classroom rituals of teaching, they heavily depended on

³⁵ Head of Department (HOD) detention is conducted once a week for learners who consistently flout the rules.

order maintained through a strong management team (Christie, 1998). At *Good Hope School* the principal continued to play a dominant role in all spheres of the school governance which is in keeping with Karlsson's (2002) findings that the principal was the chief decision maker.

6.3.2 The Classroom Space

Leander (2004) expounds on Lefebvre's (1991b) notion of human activity being situated in space and time and asserts that different activities serve to produce different types of space and time and "individuals are constantly in the process of vying for power and negotiating alignments and identities" (p. 189). The familiarity of the classroom space in collective imagination provides a stasis for what that space is. Yet, classroom space is dynamic and constantly being reproduced differently. The different constructions of the classroom space create different images of the learners in that space. Learners' identities grow out of their physical positioning in the classroom space as well as their relationships to others who occupy that space. The home environment (discussed in Chapter 4), creates conflictual experiences for learners in a school space dominated by normalised practices authenticated across decades of existence. Learners learn to deal with the contradictions by conforming in the classroom school environment. However, learner conformism is contingent upon their view of what is happening in the space at a particular moment in time in their transitions across home, community and school. Kanya explained why she listened more to her class teacher:

Interviewer: *So what's the favourite thing that you like to do at school?*

Kanya: *My favourite thing is when miss (the class teacher) is there at the class. I don't like when there's other teachers... Sometimes he shouts and it hurts my heart and then sometimes I just forget it and... he has a right to shout at me because I did wrong.*

Interviewer: *So, when she shouts at you, you don't mind?*

Kanya: *No miss, I don't mind.*

Interviewer: *But when Miss shouts at you, then you do mind?*

Kanya: *Miss, cause Miss swears us.*

All the teachers at *Good Hope School* who taught the Grade 6 class prepared and delivered their lessons with integrity. However, within that space there were many varied interpretations of what was required. Teachers adopted a variety of teaching styles that reflected their personalities and abilities. They used the reading method, discussions, copying notes from the board and group work (amongst others). Most commonly used was the traditional 'chalk and talk' supported with the worksheet.

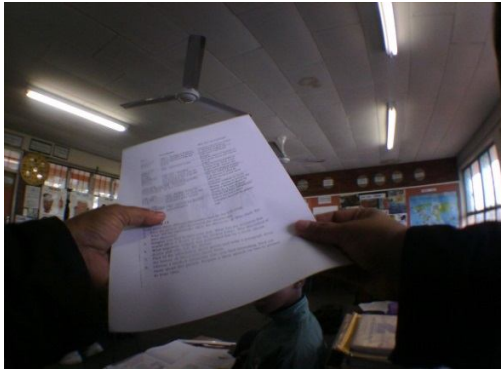


Figure 51: A worksheet

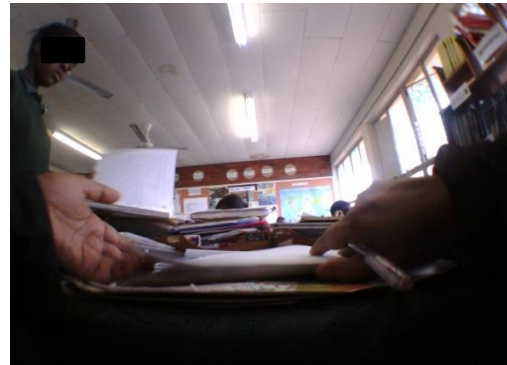


Figure 52: Learner getting help from teacher

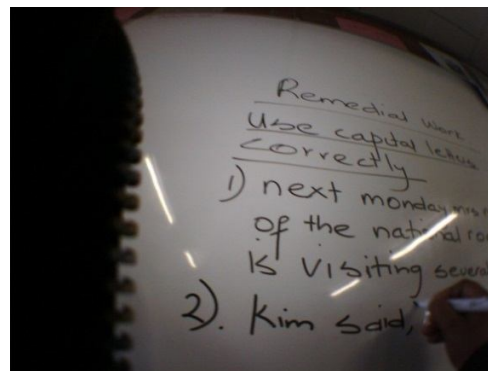


Figure 53: Teacher writing on the board



Figure 54: Learners working together in groups

Stoffels (2005) suggests that following the dramatic curriculum changes which took place following 1994, teachers were expected to make far reaching changes to their teaching practices. The expectation was that teachers would be “creative and innovative curriculum developers able

to design and develop learning materials according to the needs of their learners” (Stoffels, 2005, p. 147). During that period of change many teachers opted for commercially developed learner support materials. This was also a consequence of poor support from the state and a lack of faith (on the part of teachers) in the new curriculum design.

While teachers have settled into the new curriculum demands, their teaching practices reflect a reluctance to adopt teaching practices that could challenge their disciplinary control in the classroom or replace them as the only voice of knowledge. Classroom teaching practices largely reflected what Stoffels (2006) also found in his research, notably, “didactical teaching and learning” dominated by “teacher talk and learner passivity”. Learners represented as “immutable mobiles” (Latour, 2007a; Leander, 2002b) occupy an uncomfortable relationship within a space where their alterity is constantly under scrutiny and challenge. In spaces where learners are represented as immutable mobiles teachers are the only experts who act as judges over learners’ work (Leander, 2002b).

At *Good Hope School* learning support materials were developed through the cooperation of teachers (across schools) who shared worksheets. The worksheet gained greater prominence as a legitimate learner support material that is easily copied. The reliance on and popularisation of the worksheet also stemmed from many teachers’ lack of “professional confidence” (Stoffels, 2005, p. 148) to develop their own materials in the wake of far reaching curriculum changes that challenged traditional practices. I also noticed a reliance on old textbooks and a distrust of the new government issued workbooks, which were used largely as filler materials. The way lessons were planned and delivered was closely aligned to the school’s assessment programme. Learner tasks were directed at testing for reporting purposes and were replicated by different teachers across the school space in a typically predefined school fashion situated through historical practice and largely uncontested – as Leander (2002b) states, “historically sedimented and stabilized” (p. 218).

Group work took learners out of their regular places and tended to be noisy. Most of the learners enjoyed those lessons as they built things together and were temporarily allowed to break the

‘silence rule’ as well as the ‘remain in your place’ rule. In the following pictures children are working on a project in which they are building electric circuits (see Figure 55).

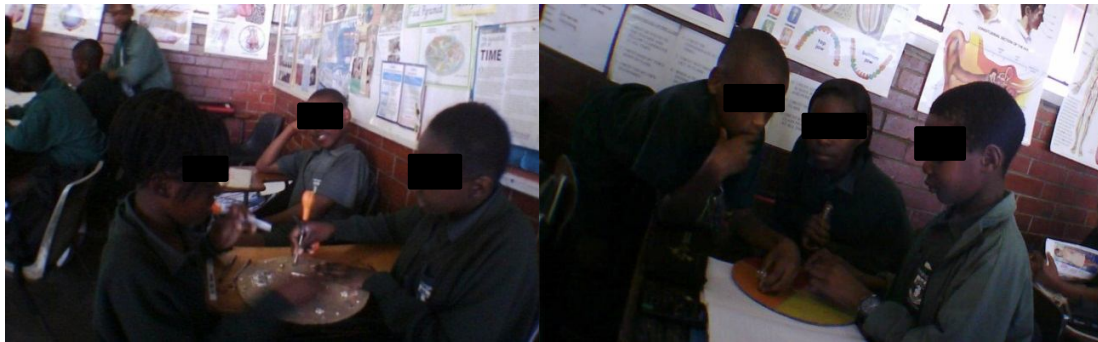


Figure 55: Learners building electric circuits

They are interested in what they are doing and discuss intently how to make the project work. The teacher walks around and gives advice where needed or asked for. A few learners use the opportunity for messing around (Figure 56). Serious groups reprimand their team mates if they are not helping. Some learners withdraw completely from project work. I asked Carl about his participation in group work.

Interviewer: *Okay, Do you always choose the same people to work with?*

Carl: *Yes, Miss.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Carl: *Because Miss, the other ones don't want us, Miss...*

Interviewer: *For what reason don't they want you?*

Carl: *Miss, sometimes they say we are too many and other times they say, I don't know they just say no ...*

Interviewer: *What do you think the reason is they don't want you?*

Carl: *Because sometimes, Miss, some of us don't bring anything.*



Figure 56: These learners enjoy themselves but do very little work

The boys enjoyed the freedom of project work but could not work well together or produce a worthwhile project (see Figure 56). Exclusion of some learners related to both status and perceived ability. Poor children felt excluded because they could not make financial contributions. In my interview with Penny she revealed how she felt marginalised by teachers and learners:

Penny: Like when it is difficult work like our project just now technology. It is very expensive to buy globe and batteries.

Interviewer: If you can't buy all these things, what do you do? Do you get into trouble?

Penny: Ja

Interviewer: With the teacher or with the group?

Penny: The teacher and the group. They leave me alone.

Interviewer: They don't let you participate?

Penny: The group they just leave me alone, and they won't take me they won't allow me...

Most important to teachers in lessons was disciplinary control. Lessons like group work that compromised teacher control were not popular as they challenged the maintenance of the necessary order. McNeil (1980) called teaching that sacrificed teaching content for disciplinary control “defensive teaching”. Defensive teaching practices were teachers’ strategies to minimise student resistance and in his view accounted for lowered expectations in the learning environment. McNeil maintained that in order to control their students teachers trivialised course content, made simplistic representations, limited teaching strategies and omitted difficult or controversial topics (Stoffels, 2005). Stoffels (2005) found in his study that control was but one of the factors that led to defensive teaching and added lack of resources, low self-efficacy and a difficult workload as contributory factors for defensive teaching strategies. He therefore argued that “the observed regularity with which teachers prefer not to exercise their decision-making autonomy, speaks of self-regulating, defensive teaching - a strategy to cope with this threat of intensification” (Stoffels, 2006, p. 1). My notes about a spelling test provide evidence of the trivialising of the course content and an example of defensive teaching:

The teacher writes the word, using his finger on the board to help learners who are finding spelling difficult. He also reminds the learners to break the words into syllables. *This is a spelling test.* Once again learners don't cover up the work and they can copy from one another.

The teacher says, ‘Nobody should copy’

Pops is given a demerit. He objects and says Chantal asked him a question and he was answering. Chantal agrees that she asked a question. She is warned not to do it again. During the test the teacher explains conditions learners will find at high school during a test. The teacher breaks words into

syllables slowly to help learners with the spelling test.

[I wonder if the learners learnt for the test. Many appear confused. The teacher is giving a lot of help. He is saying the words slowly, breaking into syllables, saying it slowly again and writing with his finger on the board].

The reliance on ready-made worksheets and outdated teaching methods highlights the need to further investigate the “subjective experiences and thinking” (Stoffels, 2006, p. 3) which shape the teaching practices. This study was not designed to investigate teacher practices as such but it must be noted that teaching practices are an important part of how learners experience school and the way they learn.

Normalised teaching practices create a veneer of good standards evident in neat, well organised books. The evidence of actual practices paints a different picture of a compromised learning environment. Stoffels (2006) suggests four reasons why teachers are overwhelmed by forces that bedevil their efforts:

- The administrative burden carried by teachers
- The shortage of teachers due to rationalization and redeployment has increased responsibilities for those left in the school and decreased the amount of preparation time in the school day.
- Poor training when curriculum changed from being teacher centred to be learner centred.
- Waves of curricular changes have led to uncertainty and burnout.

My experience at *Good Hope School* supports Stoffels’ assertions. Like Stoffels (2006), I got the sense that there was just “too much that is expected, just too much to do and too little time in which to meet all the demands” (p. 19) resulting in defensive teaching methods that created the veneer that they were coping in a very vulnerable classroom environment. I would concur with Stoffels (2006) that “When teachers’ minds are preoccupied with survival, cutting corners and mere coverage of the texts, effective teaching and learning is severely compromised” (p. 20).

6.3.3 Time Management

“As organisations, schools are structured around axes of time and space, which constitute significant boundaries for learning and teaching” (Christie, 1998, p. 287).

Time has been normalised in the school space and the day is regularised into discrete time units that signal the start and end of the day, break times and length of teaching periods. Penalties are associated with late coming and being out of bounds during particular time frames. Christie calls

the break down in the ritualised formal structure of time and space in some schools as the break down in the culture of learning and teaching (Christie, 1998). Through her involvement with the *Committee on the Culture of Learning and Teaching* (CCOLT), a project established in the province of Gauteng by the Minister of Education in early 1995, Christie found that time boundaries were not maintained in the schools they visited.

At *Good Hope School* I found evidence of the breakdown in time management in the school. While not on the scale described by Christie, the evidence is worrying nevertheless. Besides learners being out of class because of being sent on numerous errands (see Table 4 below), there were many other unscheduled disruptions in the school day.

The following record is not accurate because learners sometimes left without me noticing and I only noticed when they returned. For some weeks the record was only kept for one day. From week five onwards I only spent three days per week at the school. Week 4 is the only week when records were kept for the whole 5 day week.

Week	Learners leave class on errands	Learners enter class on errands	Total time of lesson interruptions for errands
3	20 min	10.5 min	30.5 min
4	68.5 min	18 min	86.5 min
5	55 min	11.5 min	66.5 min
6	55 min	7.5 min	62.5 min
7	9.5 min	5.5 min	15 min
8	8.5 min	18.5 min	27 min
9	43.5 min	4.5 min	48 min
10	2 min	4 min	6 min
11	49 min	10 min	59 min
TOTAL	311 min	90 min	401 min

Table 4: Time spent on errands

In addition to the interruptions described above, classes were often interrupted because of special assemblies or other activities like sports events or farewell concerts that took learners out of the classroom learning space. Teachers continuously complained about the many interruptions. However, a teacher told me that it had improved a great deal:

Respondent 2: *Yes, now that has been the complaint over the years, for many years and they never used to tell us in advance. They used to say right OK teachers come down at 12 'o clock, there's an announcement. Have some visitors, then we have to go, leave your lessons whatever class you're in, and go down. Now your lesson's gone and you forgot where you were and when you come back you're in another class - that was a very common complaint amongst teachers. Too many interruptions. And that is from the time I started at this school which was 9 years ago.*

Interviewer: *It's been a pattern. But now you have a warning but the pattern continues?*

Respondent 2: *We told them now to tell. Now it's not... there's still that outside people coming a lot, giving this talk or whatever, but now it's not so bad with timing. They tell you in advance...*

The prioritising of visitors' needs over that of the academic programme indicates the importance given to visiting dignitaries and friends. This could be indicative of the role outsiders played in the school's financial survival. It could also be about prioritising moral and life teaching in the school. The many interruptions were also related to teachers' responsibilities for the fund raising programme. In preparation for the sports day the entire day was shortened for a few weeks to create time for practice in the afternoons. The sports practice itself was a farce as the school did not have the space or infrastructure to accommodate all the learners on the field or conduct viable athletics training. Nevertheless it was considered important that in spite of the numerous compromises, sports day should continue.

A solidly constructed timetable promoted a veneer for the structure of a well-oiled machine. While the school could not be described as dysfunctional, poor time management was indicative of an underlying problem that caused anxiety amongst teachers and learners alike. Christie (1998) cautions that the disruption of the day to day smooth rhythmical functioning of the school could lead to a malfunction in the learning and teaching environment.

6.4 Everyday Schooling Experiences

In the following section I outline and discuss the practices located in the everyday that contribute to the way learners experience education. The diagram below (Figure 57) illustrates how layers of everyday practices superimpose on one another and obfuscate the elements responsible for learning suppression. The veneer is represented by the darker circles superimposed on the other layers that become lighter and less significant because they are less visible.

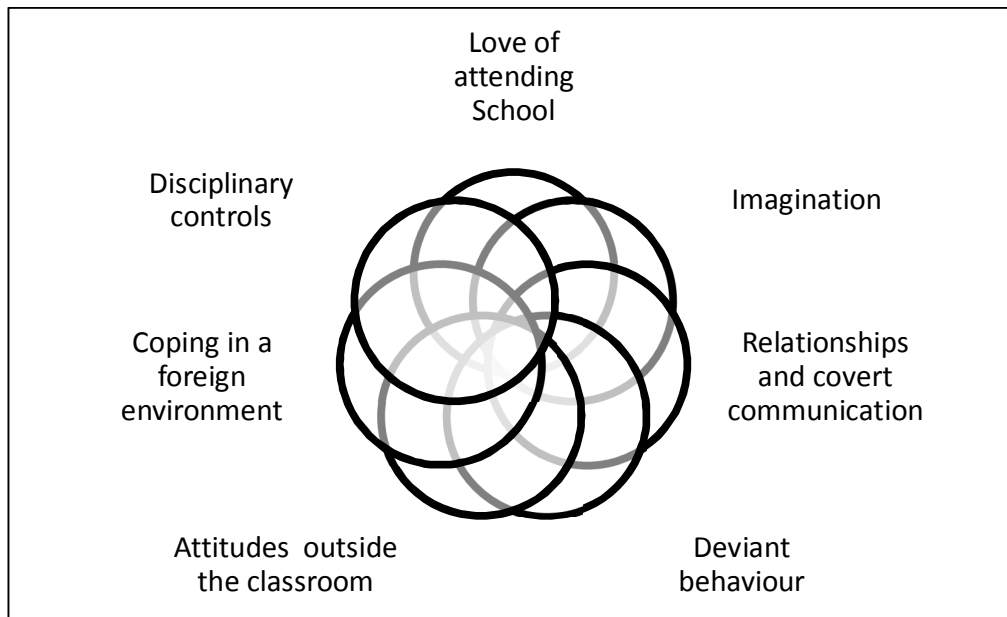


Figure 57: Some everyday realities in a learner's school life

The veneer shows what the school presents as authentic. Learners understand the veneer they are to present and participate in ensuring that the school is presented well. That is inculcated into them from the moment they enter the school environment. However, clandestinely learners participated in strategies to subvert and deflect learning. Part of learner strategies to subvert the learning process was found in everyday practices that had become normalised within the learner discourse. Learners had perfected methods of deflecting learning that did not fall into the zone of their interest or rejecting something because it did not have much entertainment value. They deflected learning by creating diversions from the activity the teacher was pursuing or by engaging in other clandestine activities that created the impression that they were working. The deflection was passed from learner to learner who fell inside the zone of those who wanted to 'goof off'. Not all learners participated. Many of the learners complied with the teacher's instructions and did the set work. Some such learners, squeezed between those participating in the deflection, struggled to maintain concentration to complete the task at hand. This situation was exacerbated by cramped seating arrangements and overcrowded classrooms. Below (Figure 58 and Figure 59) are examples of learner deflection strategies:

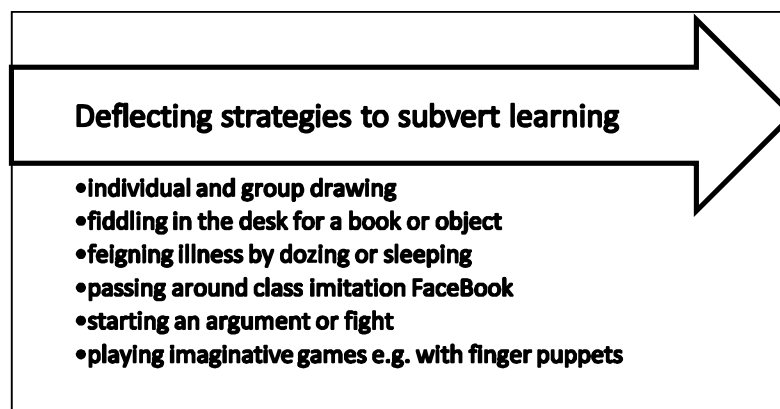


Figure 58: Deflecting activities that learners engage in

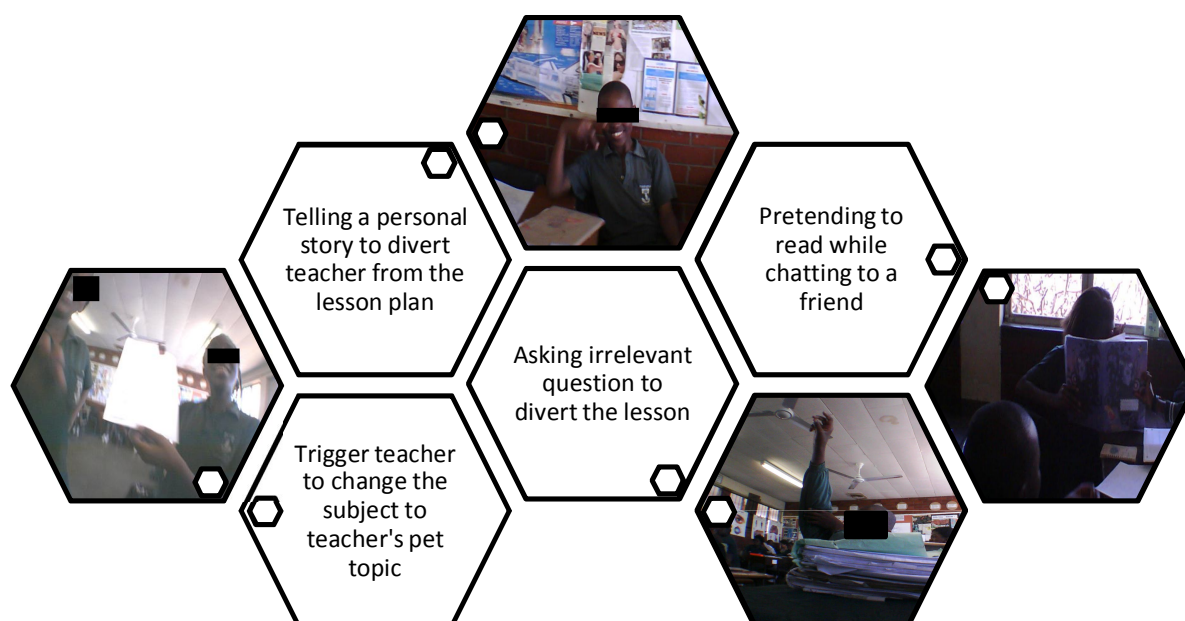


Figure 59: Deflecting the teacher's attention

The teacher assumed that the learners were performing the set work when the class was quiet and busy. Turner et al. (2002) found that avoidance strategies were often adopted to deflect attention from low ability, undermine performance and “may contribute to the devaluation of learning and dropping out of school” (p. 88). They found that it was important for teachers to support learners both cognitively and emotionally in the classroom environment.

Both teachers and learners brought their own understanding of reality into the classroom space. The veneer is indicative of the reality promoted by the school. Learners' responses, through their

deflection strategies, indicate a different value system that is not always in keeping with what the school promotes as values needed for successful learning.

The following sections delve into various practices and attitudes that contribute to learning experiences. They include deflection strategies and address areas responsible for learning suppression. While the crucial focus is how learners experience education, I continue to delve into why they experience education the way they do.

6.4.1 School Attendance

One of the aspects that stood out throughout my stay at *Good Hope School* was the fact that the learners loved attending school. Teachers concurred with me when I suggested this to them. According to the questionnaire that learners completed anonymously, every learner in the Grade Six class loved attending school and all of them (bar six) preferred attending school to being on holiday. Learners did not give clear reasons why they preferred school to being at home but the deplorable conditions under which many of them lived may explain it in part. Many of them lived cooped up in small flats and were not allowed to wander around the area because it was unsafe. Lana explained her mother's point of view:

Eish, no, she doesn't want me to walk around, because the more you walk around you are going to be education in different places, but every person has different education. If you're going to go to your friend's house, and that place is really bad and they do drugs, you're also going to get addicted. And she's especially scared about ...

Lana postulated a fear of being influenced by the world of drugs. At home she spent her time doing chores, looking after siblings, watching television or listening to music. That the school was perceived as a safe zone increased the positive light in which it was perceived by learners who lived the greater part of their lives surrounded by unsafe zones.

The question to be asked is whether appreciation of being at school translated into effective learning. If school attendance was about escape from conditions at home it is understandable that it did not necessarily translate into a commitment to learning. School was only a temporary escape. If part of that love of school was related to appreciating school for its entertainment value or because they were treated better than they were in their home environment it would explain the lack of commitment to learning from some learners. This study indicates that learners

appreciated learning that offered some entertainment value. When that was what was constantly sought after and was not constantly delivered, learners expressed boredom and a lack of commitment to learning. This thesis cannot make conclusive assumptions about why the love of school did not translate into effective learning but does contend that there is no single answer. Rather, the multiple contexts situated in both the home and school environment contribute to it.

6.4.2 Learner Attitudes in Pictures

The following are pictorial representations of a revision lesson. The photographs are placed sequentially to provide evidence of learner attitudes and bodily positioning during a lesson.

Before teacher arrives in the classroom



Doing nothing



Consulting over a project?

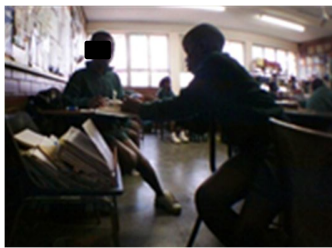


Turning around and stretching in confined space

Teacher conducting a lesson



Teacher faces class – learners look at her. Learner at the board is doing corrections.



Teacher's back is turned – Learners engage in another activity



Teacher's back is turned – learners look away, their attention diverted.

After the lesson



The explanation over, the teacher returns to her desk; learners are expected to complete a task but take a while to settle down



Teacher leaves the classroom. Learners continue copying corrections from the board. Monitor in front keeps order.



More monitors at the board once their work is completed.

Teacher has left the classroom



More learners out of their places... the longer the teacher's absence, the less control monitors are able to exert.



Increased numbers out of their places, standing around...



Next teacher arrives and learners get back to looking like they are working

In the illustrated revision lesson learners were being provided with the answers for work given the day before. The teacher monitored the answers copied on the board by a learner. She used consensus amongst learners to establish the correctness of the answer. Learners marked and did corrections without engaging much with the process. This exercise was repeated daily and learners easily went through the motions of the routine.

Learners kept themselves busy and tried to keep out of the teacher's immediate vision. They were constantly on the lookout for opportunities for entertainment. Hence when the teacher's back was turned they started doing things overtly that they concealed when they were in the teacher's view. Learners usually did not deliberately confront authority but at times were caught out. They judged teachers by their ability to keep them entertained. However, they understood the rules and succumbed to playing by those rules in the presence of the teacher. The subverting of school rules and those in authority should be seen in the light of the push and pull for control between teachers and learners. It is also related to the conflict between behaviour acceptable to teachers and that which demonstrated belonging in peer authorised domains. Carter (2003), in her study of low income African-American youth, found that the youth presented different persona depending on the social setting in which they performed. They used the expected dominant discourse positionings to acquire status in that space and understood how to negotiate authentic speech to gain linguistic and cultural capital in both dominant or peer group settings. At *Good Hope School* the scenario of behaviour in the presence of the teacher and the different behaviour in their absence was played out throughout the school day. In the teacher's absence there was the slang talk, rapping and bravado from boy learners but a quick return to the formal atmosphere was obvious in the teacher's presence. Surreptitious communication and activities were conducted without the teacher noticing.

The lack of motivation on the part of learners to engage effectively with their learning has been researched by Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006). They reject the notion that motivation resides entirely within the individual and maintain that motivated behaviour in school results from a combination of student and situational characteristics. Within the classroom context, the site of their research, they found it important to recognise that, among other factors, individuals' beliefs about their academic ability, expectations about the outcomes of engaging in the task and goals

for the task were influenced by social-contextual factors. Teachers were encouraged to shift their roles away from the lecturing, controlling expert toward becoming a facilitator who encouraged learners to learn for themselves at their own pace. Meyer and Turner (2002) suggest scaffolding as an instructional process in which a teacher supports students developing autonomy. However, Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) caution that the need for too much scaffolding could indicate that learners find the tasks too difficult or that they are not sufficiently involved with their learning and are therefore overly dependent on the teacher's support. Constant dependence on the teacher was a factor at *Good Hope School*.

The learners' own actions, individually and in support of peers, deflected the learning process. Despite efforts by the teacher to draw them into learning some learners indulged in activities that were removed from the activity. Teachers became frustrated with learner attitudes that subverted the learning process in the classroom. Research has shown that the attitudes of peers are important "in shaping the classroom environment and influencing feelings towards academics" and "can be adversely affected by negative social environments, such as family difficulties or rejection by peers" (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006, p. 342). Where there were ambiguities and conflicts between the values and social contexts of their transitions between home, community and school, learners became less motivated and devalued their learning experience. This study shows strong indications of such ambiguities and contradictions.

The subordination of the child in the classroom space is achieved through "the institutionalization of adult control through spatial practice" (Nespor, 1997, p. 125). This research shows that some learners subverted those controls through every means possible and deflected learning in diverse ways not obvious to the adults who continued to believe they were in control. As much as the school established ways of restricting children's movement and oracy the children found ways around it to continue their own entertainment at the expense of their controlled learning directed in the classroom space. A study Nespor (1997, p. 221) refers to, confirms that children are able to communicate without any visible signs. In that study, microphones were attached to the children and they were watched by observers. The recordings from the microphones indicated that less than a quarter of the private utterances recorded by the children's microphones were apparent to the observers. This concurs with the findings in this

study that indicates that learners devised covert messaging systems that were not easily apparent to outside observers.

6.4.3 Covert Learner Communication and Relationships

Learners created their own Facebook style diary that they passed around the class on a daily basis. They told me about the book but would not allow me to take a look as it was a private thing among the learners. They told me that they each had a page and they wrote in it when they wanted to. It was a book in which learners could freely address their issues without the prying eyes of controlling adults. Lana told me about it when I asked her about relationships in the class. Her answer revealed information not only about the relationships but also the networking happening in the classroom away from the scrutiny of adults.

Interviewer: *And is there any girlfriend/boyfriend problem in the class?*

Lana: *Wooh! Lots! Because I...these children are going on this Mxit³⁶, Facebook, or Myspace all this stuff there, so they chat and blah blah blah -. All boyfriends and girlfriends – And there is a book around the class. Like Mxit stuff, they talk.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean a book?*

Lana: *Oh, let say I write my fake name...*

Interviewer: *Oh, I've seen that book going around...*

Lana: *And then I write my status, my age, blah blah blah blah. Then on my page, people can write and talk to me. Let's say Penny wrote and talk to me, 'I love you', and then I write on her page, 'You too'. Then you send it around.*

Interviewer: *Is the book successful? Does it work?*

Lana: *Ja!*

The class *Facebook* was not the only clandestine communication in the class. Notes passed around the class throughout the day. Teachers did not approve of learners writing notes to one another and usually confiscated the notes if they found them. Very often the notes were of a private nature but learners through whose hands they were passing would open the note if they

³⁶ **Mxit** (pronounced 'mix it') is a free instant messaging application developed by Mxit Lifestyle (Pty) Ltd. in South Africa that runs on multiple mobile and computing platforms. Along with its own standard protocol, it can connect to Yahoo, ICO, Google Talk, Facebook, AIM, or Windows Live Messenger contacts as well. According to a 2011 study by consultancy World Wide Worx, Mxit currently has about 10 million active subscribers, making it the largest mobile social network in Africa (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mxit>).

wanted to reveal its contents to humiliate the writer or the recipient. Sometimes learners would pass the notes to teachers if they wanted the learner to get into trouble.

Notes that were passed around were sometimes about relationships. Learners passed notes to the ones they wanted to date. Sometimes the feelings were not reciprocated. Ike explained:

Ike: *Like these days Khanya and friends are always talking about boyfriends and stuff. Just the other day they caught her with a letter, saying about, she broke up with Elvin, but Elvin doesn't have any relationship with her.*

Interviewer: *Elvin in our class?*

Ike: *Ja, they caught her.*

Interviewer: *And what happened?*

Ike: *They gave her demerits and I don't know anything else. They said it's not allowed and then ... that's the only chance you will be getting and I'll put you on daily report.*

Another form of private communication was through social media forums like Mixit. Lana explained:

And especially there's a lot of children in our class on Mxit. They chat all sorts of stuff. And a lot of children have girlfriends and boyfriends. I don't think they should have that. Cause you will think of other things than what you study. And that's what cause teenage pregnancy, and stress and people commit suicide and all of that.

Trace (2008) investigated the world of learners' informal communication and noted that the documents learners created had both an immediate use and a larger purpose. In the immediate he recognised the kind of 'underground' communication mentioned above that students carried out every day. The larger purpose had to do with the learners' need for "control and self-determination" as well as to "form and establish social bonds" (2008, p. 1552). By working outside the normal rules of the classroom, learners created their own code that was not only imitative of teen and adult behaviour but also a very creative facsimile of the electronic version.

6.4.4 Friendship, Attitudes and Behaviour

Friendships are crucial for learners' development. In interviews at *Good Hope School* learners expressed the importance of their friends. Carl spoke of playing soccer and watching television with his friends. He loved living in Umlazi largely because of the friends he had:

Carl: *Everyday, Miss, at night, I hear lot of fights, turning, turning, turning.*

Interviewer: *What are they doing?*

Carl: *Miss, they are like, turning, turning and making noise.*

Interviewer: *And that's why you like Umlazi? Why else would you like Umlazi?*

Carl: *Miss, because there, Miss, I have a lot of friends.*

In this instance Carl found comfort in the noise and apparent disorder of his environment. This was very different to the way the learners who lived in the city centre and beach front viewed their areas. For them the noise outside was symptomatic of the violent surroundings.

Like the children in Thorne and Luria's study (1986), the children of *Good Hope School*, largely spent their free time on the playground in gender specific, same sex groups. Gender segregation is a common observation in other studies cited by Thorne and Luria. However, it is noted that there are exceptions and gender segregation is not a total segregation. Thorne and Luria observe that there is more segregation when there is less supervision. When contrasting social organisation and relationships of boys and girls, the researchers noticed:

Boys tend to interact in larger and more publically-visible groups; they more often play outdoors, and their activities take up more space than those of girls. Boys engage in more physically aggressive play and fighting; their social relations tend to be overtly hierarchical and competitive. (Thorne & Luria, 1986, p. 179)

The language girls used indicated that they stressed cooperation and 'being nice' in their interaction. While this did not mean that girls never fought, their overall demeanours signalled less aggression than males. In girl groups there was an emphasis on appearance that increased over the course of fifth grade, and symbols of cultural adolescence - lip gloss (kept hidden in desks and clandestinely passed from girl to girl), hairbrushes and long-tailed combs - began to appear (Thorne & Luria, 1986, p. 185). Those findings concur with this thesis. Many girls in the class were fond of grooming themselves and looking at themselves in the mirror. One particular learner could stare at her image in the mirror for very long periods. Since she was considered well behaved she was seldom reprimanded for this. Girls usually played roles as peacemakers when conflict arose in the class.



Figure 60: Learner continuously looking in the mirror

Grade five and six boys explore their sexuality through secretly viewing pornography while girls are more inclined to explore themes of romance (Thorne & Luria, 1986). Writers acknowledge that girls generally link sexuality with romance (Carpenter, 1998). In research conducted by Lemish, Liebes and Seidmann (2001) it was found that girls had a clear interest in human relationships, particularly romance and friendships. Thorne and Luria (1986) note that sexual and romantic teasing mark hierarchies in children's interaction. Indications that a boy 'likes' a girl (or vice versa) is a source for gossip and reporting to adults - usually teachers. Children use heterosexual teasing "to maintain and police boundaries between 'the girls' and 'the boys,' defined as separate groups" (Thorne & Luria, 1986, p. 186). Bullies often used such teasing, as well as demeaning statements about learners' unfashionable or threadbare attire, that sometimes led to fights at *Good Hope School*.

In their interviews, learners explained how they used fantasy as a means of escape from the traumatic experience of being bullied. When she spoke about being bullied, Penny cried during her interview:

Penny: *Ja. She makes, like when I was sitting with her she makes... She makes up a name and then she makes the whole group say it to me.*

Interviewer: *What name?*

Penny: *Like when my shoes are open - not these shoes. The others.... She says the shoes are hungry.*

Ike spoke about teasing other children:

Ike: *They tease me like my head is... like this way. Like they... or something. But I tease Sammy back.*

Interviewer: *What do you say to him?*

Ike: *Fatty. I'm not proud of it. When he teases me I just say 'Sammy, be careful, ask everyone over here, they know me. I'm not a good person. When you tease I'll make you cry...*

Learners generally appeared helpful and attentive to one another but on occasion tensions would explode and result in terrible confrontations. On one occasion there was a disagreement between Andy and Sammy. Sammy turned around and shouted at Andy, "*At least I have a mother*". Andy is an orphan and Sammy had been abandoned by his mother. Sammy expressed sincere regret afterwards. The confrontation appeared to be about what was not said as well as what was said. Sammy's outburst could be a reflection of his personal pain related to his mother's absence.

Most learners in the class came from single parent families. In the school space the traditional nuclear family structure was celebrated. Some learners were forced by circumstances to live with other family members who were not their parents. This was experienced differently by those learners.

Both Andy and Kanya were forced by family circumstances to live with other family members. Andy experienced this very traumatically while Kanya used her life with middle class relatives to establish herself for a better future. However, her sights were not on a schooling career. She had notions of becoming a model and prepared herself through grooming herself, associating with other girls with similar ambitions and reading appropriate magazines. She was hoping to be registered with a modeling agency soon. She seldom saw her mother who lived in another province and her estranged father had remarried. This did not define her life. She grabbed at what she perceived as an opportunity to do better than her parents had. Andy on the other hand expected his grandmother to rescue him from his relatives and take him back to the countryside where he had images of happiness that he was unable to establish with his aunt in Durban. Andy's imaginative engagement with Dragon Ball Z was used as an escapist strategy from the difficulties of his life as well as his learning. Kanya's imaginative engagement also removed her from the classroom space to a future life as a model. While Andy looked forward to his visits to the rural areas, Kanya was antagonistic to having to spend time with her grandfather during the holidays as it removed her from her urban pursuits.

Physical confrontation was not uncommon. Usually it took the form of pushing and shoving. It often happened on the playground and situations had to be diffused by teachers on duty. However, on one occasion a fight happened in the classroom. Ike was so aggravated by a remark made by Siphso that he beat him quite badly. On the day in question I heard Ike tell Siphso to stop talking about girls. A serious argument started with both pointing fingers and shouting loudly. Suddenly I saw Ike jump off his chair and throw Siphso down on the floor between the desks. Siphso cringed as Ike punched him mercilessly. A teacher sent both boys to the vice principal. I asked the learners closest to me what had caused the fight and they said it was because Siphso teased Ike about the shape of his head.

Sipho continuously teased the children around him. It was usually in Zulu and I did not always understand what he was saying but I could see the reaction of those he teased. For days he teased Ike about his shoes. He called them “China Mall shoes”. Ike defended himself by saying the shoes were from Vietnam and were not from the China Mall. It was clear that Ike felt very insulted by the remark. Sipho got other children around to join in the teasing. When the fight eventually happened the underlying causes became a bit hazy, including all the frustrations of before. In his interview Ike revealed that Sipho used Zulu swear words that triggered him to respond so violently.

The shoes were symbolic of things that learners valued. Shoes were an indicator of whether a learner fitted in or not. Shoes gave individuals status and power. Learners were judged by the shoes they wore. Children made it clear that ‘China Mall shoes’ were unacceptable. Ike understood that the shoes held a deeper meaning:

Interviewer: *So what do you think he’s actually saying because the China Mall, you’re saying is not really that? What do think he’s actually saying when he’s calling you that?*

Ike: *He’s saying that I’m poor.*

Interviewer: *Oh, and that is painful?*

Ike: *Ja.*

Interviewer: *Why do you think that being called poor is painful?*

Ike: *Being...not being like rich enough to afford something. That’s what it is for me.*

The school introduced casual shoes to replace traditional school shoes to save parents some money. The shoes could be used for sport activities as well. The learners created deeper meanings attached to the shoes that were very symbolic of their consumerist society. The shoe symbolised how an apparently standardised item like shoes assumes multiple meanings amongst the learners in a globally branded consumerist society. There was great importance attached to goods that acquired a cultural attitude and value of their own.



Figure 61: Shoes worn at Good Hope School

The underlying tensions associated with the ‘shoe insults’ could be likened to cultural codes that the learners understood that resulted in either admission or exclusion from the group. Not having the right shoes cost learners authentic peer group membership. Carter (2003) found evidence of how low-income African-American youth “set symbolic boundaries to acquire status among themselves and to ward off outsiders” (p. 142). Loulakis and Hill (2010) express the view that products are not just objects that reflect individual needs and desires but are “tools for social networking and drivers of status”(p. 45). Most importantly, the wrong shoes were an indicator of poverty – a symbol of exclusion among learners. Learners deliberately hid their poverty status.

Another identifier of status amongst the learners was learner relationships with teachers. Learners developed an understanding of their status in the class and judged learners selected for special treatment. For instance, there was one learner in the class who was selected by the teacher to be the class monitor for the whole year. Other monitors were changed on a weekly basis. Some learners developed animosity towards Rachel, the learner selected to be the overall class monitor, and saw her as the teacher’s pet.

Interviewer: *I notice sometimes you argue a lot with the girls who are in charge.*

Ike: *Ja because they are unfair, like Rachel, everyone knows she is like Miss’s pet - Miss’s favourite forever. Whenever Miss has too much work, she’s saying ‘Rachel remind me to do this, Rachel remind me to do that. This and that...’*

In their interviews learners acknowledged Rachel’s special relationship with the teacher but related differently to the situation. Unlike Ike, Penny sympathised with Rachel and called her the teacher’s secretary. She credited her with good management skills and had deep admiration for her. She thought learners who teased Rachel were jealous of her:

They don't like it when they see Rachel every time doing things. They don't like Ms Hendricks giving the jobs to Rachel. They think that Rachel is her favourite.

Lana did not agree with Penny and thought Rachel was insincere:

... cause she’s Ms Secretary, so she’s like, if she did something wrong, she blames it on someone else...She doesn’t say it to me, she tells someone else. Cause one day Miss said to me, ‘Who took these around?’ and she said it’s Lana. She likes putting the blame on someone else... Sometimes she’s good to you or she’s bad to you. She has different characters.

Rachel had earned the respect of other learners in the class when she beat up a boy at the bus stop for insulting her mother:

Interviewer: *You think they've got more respect for Rachel when she is a monitor?*

Penny: *Ja, it's because she has punched Pops in Grade 5. She...*

Interviewer: *She has what?*

Penny: *She has punched him in Grade 5 and he got a blue eye.*

Tal and Babad (1990) identified the characteristics students thought the teacher used for selecting a pet as: academic excellence, active participation in the classroom, compliance with the teacher and charm. Their findings suggest that charming and socially skilled children who show compliance and participate actively in the classroom are selected as teacher's pets. This study supports the notion that the pet phenomenon is related to a negative social climate in the classroom.

The status unwittingly accorded by teachers could be subverted by the learners in the absence of the teacher if they regarded the appointment as unfair. Jealousy and yearning for teacher attention resulted in the undermining of the monitors' authority and caused further poor behaviour from those labelled as such. More importantly, learners assumed that their not being chosen to be in Rachel's position characterised them as lesser than and incapable of doing better.

6.4.5 Imagination and Creativity

This study shows that children naturally display creative imagination. Heath (2008) is concerned that recent decades have seen "a marginalisation of the imagination in education" (p. 115). His study argues for going beyond just seeing things differently and rather moving towards a more profound understanding that crosses the boundaries "from inventiveness of perspective to the capacity to imagine what it is like to be another" (p. 116). That is also important for developing a sense of compassion.

My observations were that while learners in the classroom were often inattentive and engaged in alternate activities, a central part of their activities was engaging in an imaginative world of make believe. While physically present in the classroom their minds wandered into different worlds. However, children's creativity and imagination were often perceived by teachers as misbehaviour if they strayed outside the bounds of the set work.

The learners loved to draw. The drawings mostly occupied the learners in ways to which most of the teachers did not relate. At the time I was there, there was an interest (mostly from boys but

from a few girls as well) in the television series *Dragon Ball Z*. Learners collected everything they could that related to the TV series and much of what they did and spoke about was this. The drawings they produced were series of drawings of the various characters in *Dragon Ball Z* (Figure 62).

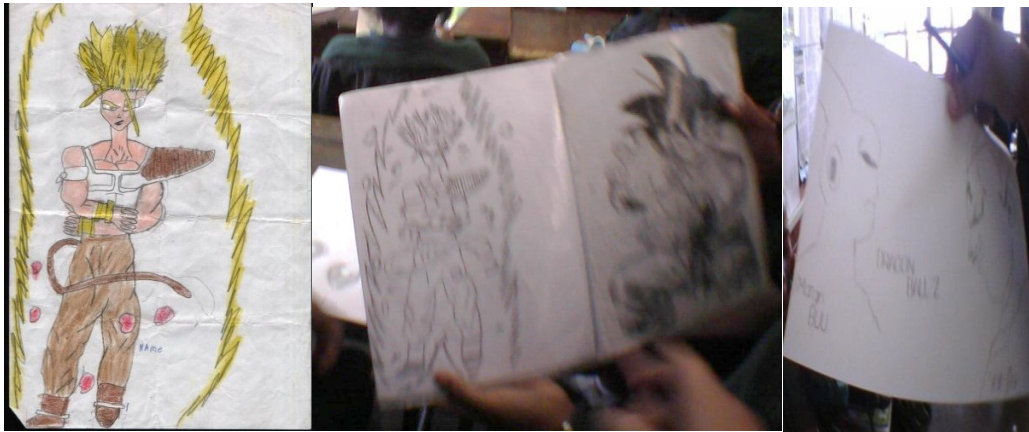


Figure 62: Drawings of characters from *Dragon Ball Z*

Their talk and play was about the characters in *Dragon Ball Z*. They imitated their facial expressions and fighting styles. They imagined that, like the characters they loved, they could change the world. They expressed the wish to be more like the *Dragon Ball Z* characters so that they could get power that would make them invincible:

Interviewer: ... But tell me, what is it about *Dragon Ball Z* that is so exciting?

Ike: Just like, the powers and stuff, and the rage makes them like more powerful or something and when they like beat up the bad guys

For many learners *Dragon Ball Z* held a fascination in terms of how power could be reimagined. Andy was the most fanatic supporter. He spent his every possible moment drawing or imagining *Dragon Ball Z*. This is what he said:

They are fun to watch. They are the best cartoons in the world. They fun to watch like they their missions- Eish!. What they do. Seems like it's real they go and help people, which is fun and you see them fighting with the bad guys turn into super saiyan³⁷. It's just fun.

Dragon Ball Z according to Wikipedia (2012):

... is a Japanese manga series written and illustrated by Akira Toriyama. ...

³⁷ Saiyans: Members of a nearly extinct extra-terrestrial race.

...Since its release, *Dragon Ball* has become one of the most successful manga and anime series of all time. The manga's 42 volumes have sold over 152 million copies in Japan and more than 200 million copies worldwide. Reviewers have praised the art, characterization, and humor of the story. It is widely regarded as one of the greatest manga series ever made, ...

In spite of its clear popularity worldwide, the teachers at *Good Hope School* failed to recognise the multi-modal world in which their learners lived. I asked Andy why he did not use his vast knowledge of *Dragon Ball Z* in his writing. His answer revealed the way the learners recognised their teachers' interests and acted accordingly:

Andy: *I'll write a small story so that I can just get marks.*

Interviewer: *Did you not think about writing a story about what you enjoy?*

Andy: *I really want to write a story about Dragon Ball Z., but I thought it would be too long because it does have a lot of ideas in my mind.*

Interviewer: *But don't you think you'll get more marks?*

Andy: *She's not interested in Dragon Ball Z.*

Andy stifled his creativity, and clearly presented a veneer acceptable to his teachers who he acknowledged as having a limited knowledge of his world of fantasy and wild imagination.

There were other imaginative tools that teachers missed because they did not enter the world of their learners. Andy shared some of the imaginings he experienced through reading:

Andy: *I feel like I'm the one who's facing my worst fear.*

Interviewer: *And what is that?*

Andy: *Like I'm beating up the bully who's bullying me every day.*

Penny described her experience:

Penny: *I wish I was Matilda.*

Interviewer: *What would you do if you were Matilda?*

Penny: *It will be just nice. Like when Mona teased me - I can just close her mouth...*

Lana shared Penny's love of the book *Matilda*. She told me Roald Dahl was her favourite author.

Lana identified with Matilda because of her father. She explained:

Interviewer: *Do you identify with Matilda in any way?*

Lana: *(long pause) I think the dad part.*

Interviewer: *What about the dad part?*

Lana: *'Cause the dad is like not really with Matilda a lot, so like my dad also is really not into our lives a lot.*

That world of imagination and intrigue was neglected by teachers located in the teaching practices of a controlled disciplinary environment, constrained pedagogic norms and limited expectations (from the learners). Robinson (2006) blames the education system for curtailing children's creativity. He says this is because the system was designed to meet the needs of the

19th century industrial age. The hierarchical arrangement of learning areas gives greatest prominence to mathematics, science and languages; lesser attention is given to humanities and the least attention is given to the arts. When children enter the education system their creative genius is high but by the time they exit the system much of their creativity has been smothered by rules and defined ways of being and doing. Robinson (2006) says that one of the reasons for this is that we stigmatise mistakes, thereby “educating people out of their creative capacities” (p. 1). In other words, the traditional style in which education is conducted relies on a set of ‘right’ answers and causes people to be afraid to be wrong and thus discourages risk taking which could lead to greater innovation (Pressley, 2009).

Robinson’s concern that the rigidity of the design of education interrupts the flow of creativity was reflected in learner attitudes that compromised their creativity to fit in with what they perceived as teacher expectations. Shepherd’s (2009) conclusion that “Creativity must be embedded into everyday teaching and learning” (p. 4) is sound advice but cannot be implemented in a system that is tightly controlled.

6.4.6 Behaviour Deemed Inappropriate

Certain behaviours were deemed as deviant or not in keeping with the school norms. Such behaviour was related to sexuality, language and cultural practices that were not in keeping with the school’s values.

6.4.6.1 Popular Culture

Incidents reported in the school logs indicate what was deemed deviant in the 1960s:

8 February 1966

Yesterday I had occasion to reprimand several girls for using rude language to one another and quarrelling in a reprehensible way.... Today at assembly I spoke to the whole school on the subject and warned them that this behaviour would not be tolerated.

16 June 1961

I regret to state that Vinney James was brought to school at 11:50 am this morning by CID Mr Vorster who reported that he had discovered Vinney in the company of ‘Ducktails’³⁸ on the beach... Vinney

³⁸ The most familiar subculture associated with the leather jacket is that of the **ducktails** of the 1950s and early 1960s, such as depicted in the movies *The Lords of Flatbush* and *Grease*, as well as by ‘The Fonz’ in *Happy Days*, aired during the early 1970s. (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/ducktails>).

was attired in a complete ducktail outfit. According to Mr Vorster, Vinney had been smoking dagga and was in the company of ducktails who were already in trouble with the law.... I hope to have him expelled from the school. He is not fit company for school children.

The similar view that some children are not fit for the company of school children was expressed by a staff member on my first day at *Good Hope School* (see Chapter 4). The counter culture that existed in the 1960s related to dress, language and other unlawful behaviour is reflected in the present in behaviours perceived as deviant and counter to what a proper school environment should be like. In the present a counter culture exists that is also related to dress, language and other behaviour deemed inappropriate. Reference has already been made to shoes and items that acquire symbolic values of high status. Children adapted quite easily to the school's cultural discourse and understood that their cultural identities were of little consequence in that environment. Dolby (1999) found that in such environments learners fashion new identities through popular culture. That common popular cultural identity unites learners across diverse national and racial identities.

Learners' interest revealed that they favoured certain rap artists whose life style and lyrics were not in keeping with the ethos of the school. In his interview Terry spoke of his love of the music produced by Lil Wayne, an American rap artist (Figure 63).



Figure 63: Rap Artist Lil Wayne³⁹

The lyrics Lil Wayne popularises and promotes are indicative of an anti-establishment style that attacks the normalised practices of society. The most popular style of rapping of the learners at

³⁹ <http://cdn.pastemagazine.com/www/articles/lil-wayne-gq-2.jpg?1348747947>

Good Hope School was strongly imitative of American rap artists like Lil Wayne. The learners not only imitated the lyrical style but used hand and finger signals and body language (note the hand over the mouth to produce sound effects - Figure 64).



Figure 64: Boys perform rap songs at school assembly

R&B (Rhythm and Blues) music heroes were also popular choices in the children's concerts. Girls, in particular, imitated and mimicked Rehana. They told me they used her for getting ideas for hairdos. Lana explained about the girls and their hairdos:

They love styles...they like, like crazy hair, some of them simple...but most of the girls love crazy hair styles and they like, like, let says...you know the hairstyle like Mona did...that's Rehana's hairstyle, so they like the hairstyles that are like now...



Figure 65: R&B artist Rehana⁴⁰

In the picture below (Figure 66), the side sweep of the learner's hairdo is imitative of Rehana's hairstyle (Figure 65).

⁴⁰ http://hairstyles.thehairstyler.com/hairstyle_views/front_view_images/983/original/8039_Rihanna.jpg



Figure 66: Learner's hairdo imitating Rehana's hairstyle

One learner defiantly wore dreadlocks, against school rules (Figure 67). He was continuously reminded by the class teacher to cut his hair and was even sent to the office but he ignored the teachers' instruction and kept the dreadlocks for the entire duration I was at the school.



Figure 67: Learner with dreadlocks

Learners loved to read magazines (Figure 68) in which their favourite artists were portrayed. Children more often read popular magazines than books that were age appropriate. An excerpt from my notes captures what a learner was reading:

Teacher leaves. Mona goes back to her desk. She is drinking something warm from a flask reading an article from the magazine titled 'Murderous boyfriend.'

The learners' interests matched the sensational articles evident in popular working class magazines and tabloids. Learners also collected pictures and stuck them into special books or on the inside of their school desks. Such pictures reflected learners' particular interests.

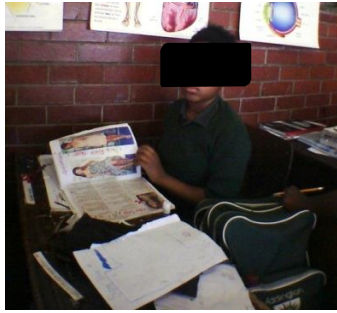


Figure 68: Learner looking at a fashion magazine

While learners followed popular cultural practices the school only incorporated some of it as entertainment value in the school concerts and other productions. It was largely at special occasions that diverse cultural identities were acknowledged. The draft programme shown in Figure 69 indicates a Congolese dance and poetry as part of the programme. Learners' national identities were largely acknowledged only for entertainment value.

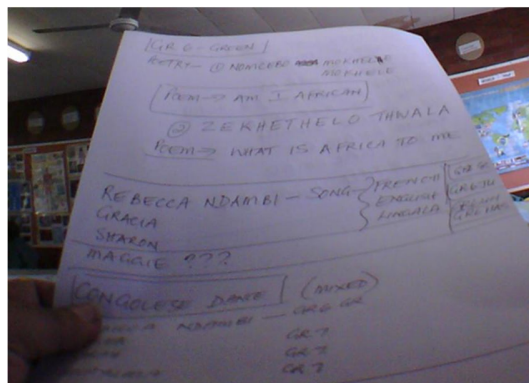


Figure 69: Teacher holding draft programme for special assembly/concert

School subjects that dealt with diverse cultural practices were life orientation as well as arts and culture. The celebration of diversity (the veneer) was promoted by the school but practices were constrained by (laminated) traditions not easily discarded.

Children at *Good Hope School* loved to perform and I witnessed many outstanding performances in assemblies and concerts at the school. The school brought in a South African singer to celebrate its birthday. He commented on the talent that *Good Hope School* learners displayed. The performances at school involved a variety of styles such as African fusion dances, Indian

dances, African traditional dances and modern dances. The African dances and singing was also representative of the migrant communities at the school.



Figure 70: Girls perform traditional song at assembly

Drug and alcohol abuse had been reported by teachers. The police had been called in to investigate and small quantities of drugs had been found in learners' possession. A teacher had also found mini bottles of alcohol in a learner's possession. Respondent 1 reflected on the different way learners regarded authority compared to when she was young:

Respondent 1: *They're fearless children. Good Hope School children - I was just talking about it now - are fearless.*

Interviewer: *Say a bit more about that. Why you say that?*

Respondent 1: *They're not afraid of consequences. Again it's like there is a new normal. I think people have cottoned on to social services – those systems are just not working – even if I don't come to school who is going to do what? Here you'll send me home for one day but what really can you'll do? So they are fearless. If I think about me I'd be afraid. When Mrs Thompson was explaining that to me, she said a few years ago she called the cops in for a drug raid and the children were crying but when she did it two weeks ago they were laughing.*

The perceived change in learners' attitudes signalled the worst fears for those in charge because if learners were fearless their programmes for prevention would not be successful. Adherence to programmes for preventative measures at the school depended in part on learners being fearful of consequences. Research that monitored trends in drug and alcohol abuse amongst adolescents in three South African cities concluded that substance abuse is on the increase amongst youth and there is a need for intervention strategies (Parry et al., 2004). Research has shown that scare tactics are ineffective strategies for the prevention of or sustained reductions of substance abuse amongst youth (Asper, 2006; Thompson, Barnett, & Pearce, 2009). Nevertheless, they acknowledge that it has been difficult to change such practices. Being situated in an area where substance abuse is rife makes learners vulnerable to being initiated into that world.

6.4.6.2 Sexuality of Children

In a conversation with a male staff member on my first day at *Good Hope School* I was confronted with a view about the children that was repeated quite often by various staff members. The main thrust of his conversation was that children were already sexually active. That view was supported by another staff member (Respondent 1) who told of children in Grade Three whom she knew were having lesbian sex. She said, *“Like the Grade Threes most of them are having sex. Lesbian sex - they go through that.”* She said most children in the other classes were sexually active. She knew this because children who came to her tended to report on one another. She linked the behaviour to the circumstances in which most of them lived. The following extract from our interview is pertinent:

Respondent 1: *Abuse; very sexual children; some Grade Two, Grade Three. Lesbian sex, full on sex.*

Interviewer: *All age groups?*

Respondent 1: *It starts like from Grade Two/Three. Grade Threes are really bad. For me most of Grade Sevens are having sex.*

Interviewer: *What do you ascribe that to?*

Respondent 1: *Um, they're left on their own, they're allowed to roam everywhere. There's TVs that they're watching these programmes. There's too many of them in one room watching parents, uncles, aunties, having sex.*

The description of learners' home circumstances was equated with their behaviour creating the impression that children who live in poorer circumstances are more likely to experiment with sex and children's sexual behaviour is directly linked to living in cramped conditions. Many researchers have investigated the link between poverty and sexual behaviour (Booyesen & Summerton, 2002; Dinkelman, Lam, & Leibbrandt, 2008; Eaton, Flisher, & Aaro, 2003; Madisa, Zulu, & Ciera, 2007; Romer et al., 1999). They draw different conclusion but largely agree that the anecdotal evidence that links poverty and early sexual experimentation is valid. Respondent 1's views corroborate views of many teachers who privately spoke of learners engaged in sex, prostitution and drugs.

Another suggestion that Respondent 1 thought proved her allegation that learners were overly sexual was their dress on civvies days and their dance at school concerts and assemblies. Dance was deemed to be overly sexual and suggestive. An extract from the interview:

... whenever there's a casual day you can see these are mini hookers. When they dance for you it's very sexual. So I can see men not seeing them as children anymore.

The linking of revealing dress with promiscuity is part of a campaign that seeks to protect childhood innocence. The contrasting view that suggests that sexy dress is a statement of power is in turn challenged. The blame is put on the fashion industry for the over-sexualisation of girls' bodies, arguing instead that there is no free choice but rather regulation of individual subjectivities as propounded by Foucault in his *Technologies of the Self* (Willett, 2008). Pilcher (2010), through her investigation into girls' dressing, suggests that girls "are both learning about and acting out the contradictions of femininity in contemporary culture" (p. 469). The over-sexualised imagery about the learners, voiced by some teachers at *Good Hope School*, uncritically demeans the girl learners.

I came to an understanding of children's sexual knowledge at the Sexuality Workshops organised by the school for Grade Six and Seven learners. The workshops were conducted by a Dutch volunteer who had been introduced to the school by a senior policeman who served on the school's governing body. The workshops were run over three one-hour sessions conducted once a week. Girls and boys were spoken to separately and the children were encouraged to speak freely and share their knowledge as well as their fears.

Banter and serious exchanges during the workshop indicated children's sexual knowledge and the probable early exposure to pornography. One of the boys whom I interviewed revealed in his interview that he watched pornography on his play station:

Andy: *Fun, I only have one violent game but I don't really play it too much because it is naughty.*

Interviewer: *How is it naughty?*

Andy: *They do some things the big people do so I switch it off and go on to play the 1st stage. The 2nd stage the erotica. Then I switched off and put on the soccer game, and if the soccer game bores me I play Dragon Ball Z.*

Andy was the only learner who openly revealed exposure to erotica in his interview. Ike (in his interview) spoke about learners at school engaging in sex on the school premises and took me to the places where he said this took place (Figure 71).



Figure 71

I indicated to Respondent 1 that learners were probably aware of contraception since her statistics of widespread sexual behaviour did not fit in with the number of pregnancies in the school. Her answer was surprising as she ascribed fewer pregnancies to learners just being lucky.

A teacher told me in a private conversation that a learner masturbated in class, made sounds of people having sex and exposed his private parts to the girls. Other learners appeared to know about the inferences the teacher made in her interaction with the boy even though it was not explicitly stated. The learner was new to *Good Hope School*, having just recently relocated from a Zulu speaking environment. Teachers felt his poor English communication skills related to his behaviour and treated him poorly by threatening him with relegation to the ‘special class’.

The findings in this study indicate concern on the part of adults that children are overly sexual. As is evident in the study by Jairam (2011), adults are generally uncomfortable about acknowledging that children are sexual beings. Current views on this very emotive topic are about defining what is considered normal or abnormal and how abnormality is related to sexual abuse by adults.

Rademakers, Laan and Straver (2008) in a study of 8 and 9 year olds of both genders and their parents found that there are both similarities and differences in the sexuality of children and adolescents/adults. Thorne and Luria (1986), who studied 9-11 year olds, suggest that despite knowledge to the contrary, we continue to “define children as innocent, vulnerable, and in need of protection from adult sexual knowledge and practice” (p. 177). In addition we define any kind of explicit sexual acts amongst children as deviant.

Like many studies on adolescent sexuality, a study by Manzini (2001) found sexual activity starting at an early age in KwaZulu-Natal. By age 16 about half the girls had engaged in sex and once it commenced sexual activity continued. Girls who engaged in sex generally had sex with boys a few years older than themselves.

In South Africa the pregnancy of young girls result in many of them dropping out of the school system. More than a quarter of 20-22 year old females who experienced a schooling disruption said it had been due to pregnancy (Grant & Hallman, 2008). A policy formalized in South Africa in 1996 allows pregnant girls to stay in school. However, some school principals regard this practice as detrimental to the young expectant mother and, in addition, believe it signals to other girls that pregnancy is acceptable.

As mentioned earlier, reports from *Good Hope School* indicate that a few girls do fall pregnant every year. During my interview with Respondent 2, a young girl with a baby interrupted our conversation. She had attended *Good Hope School* the previous year and had fallen pregnant. She reluctantly left school with plans to enter high school a year later. Respondent 2 explained:

*... She has a close relationship to me because when she got pregnant she didn't know what to do so she came to me for help. You can't scold her now it's like too late. The deed is already done. So she doesn't know what to do. She had no one guiding her. So I went and told Mrs Thompson. Oh when she fell pregnant she was in Class. She didn't tell her teacher. She came to tell me. I was her last year's teacher. Then I told she didn't even know. .. She didn't want me to tell Mrs Thompson. She was scared. Then I said I had to tell Mrs Thompson. you see Mrs Thompson could help. We got her into a place where nuns live.
... They took care of her. They actually helped her. Then she realised she can't come to school. She fought to come to school to be here. She used to come often with her big stomach. She didn't feel embarrassed. She's taking one year off then she's going back to school.*

The assumption that the girl should feel embarrassed encapsulates the dissimilar ways in which pregnancy, sexuality and rights are viewed.

Over-sexualised imagery, reflected in the views expressed by some teachers, created the notion that there was something wrong with learners who overtly displayed their sexuality and sexual knowledge. Similar sexual contradictions were evident in a study by Chambers, van Loon and Tincknell (2004) who found that “on the one hand, teenage girls were encouraged to inform themselves as much as possible about issues, especially risks, related to sexuality. On the other

hand, such 'sexual awareness' was condemned for being associated with sexual promiscuity" (p. 565).

The notion of girls being over sexualised pathologises their behaviour and labels the views of teachers as normal thereby creating the impression that girl sexual deviance is an inevitable consequence of the sexualised environment in which they live. The pathologies are accompanied by everyday culture that shames girls into a submissive asexual role. Chambers et al (2004) explain, "Identifying girls' sexual pathology as the primary cause of teenage pregnancy indicates that teachers perceive this social problem to be the product of a moral deficiency" (p. 573).

6.5 Concluding Comments

In this chapter I considered the multiplicated contexts that are networked into the way learning happens. I discussed and explored the veneer which is the visible outward symbol of the school, the teachers, the learners and the many aspects of the learning environment. Concealed in the multiple layers created through a process of lamination is the answer to why learners learn in the way they do. Learning suppression is suggested as one of the reasons why learners at a poor school do not achieve to the same standards as learners in more privileged environments. Holland and Leander (2004) suggest, "we move toward a robust picture of social positioning and its importance in constructing and producing historically specific persons as complicated social, cultural, and psychological beings" (p. 137). While the pedagogical practices of teachers require more careful analysis, the analysis in this chapter highlights the complex spatial realities in the lives of the learners as they navigate the many networks of their learning and living environments. My intention, like that of Fataar (2012), is to throw "an analytical spotlight on the relationship between, on the one hand, the social relations of learning constituted across multiple spatial domains and, on the other... learning navigations in the space of the classroom, revealing some key dimensions of how children learn in compromised circumstances" (p. 17).

Chapter 7: A Multifaceted Web of Overlapping Settings

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters I established the basis for showing that the learning experience is not just about occupying a seat in a classroom but encompasses complex positionings in space and time. In Chapter One I contextualised the thesis by explaining why I conducted the study and in Chapter Two I outlined the methodology used. In Chapter Three I laid the basis of the theoretical and conceptual framework and in Chapters Four, Five and Six I contextualised the learning within the socio-historical space and the multiplied layering of the learners' lives, as well as focused on the schooling and educational experiences of the learners.

This chapter does not attempt to reduce the analysis to a single outcome but rather, as previously stated, presents the many layers in a multifaceted web of overlapping settings. The diagram below (Figure 72) illustrates some of the complexities of the networking that emerges in the multiplicated contexts of the learners' lives.

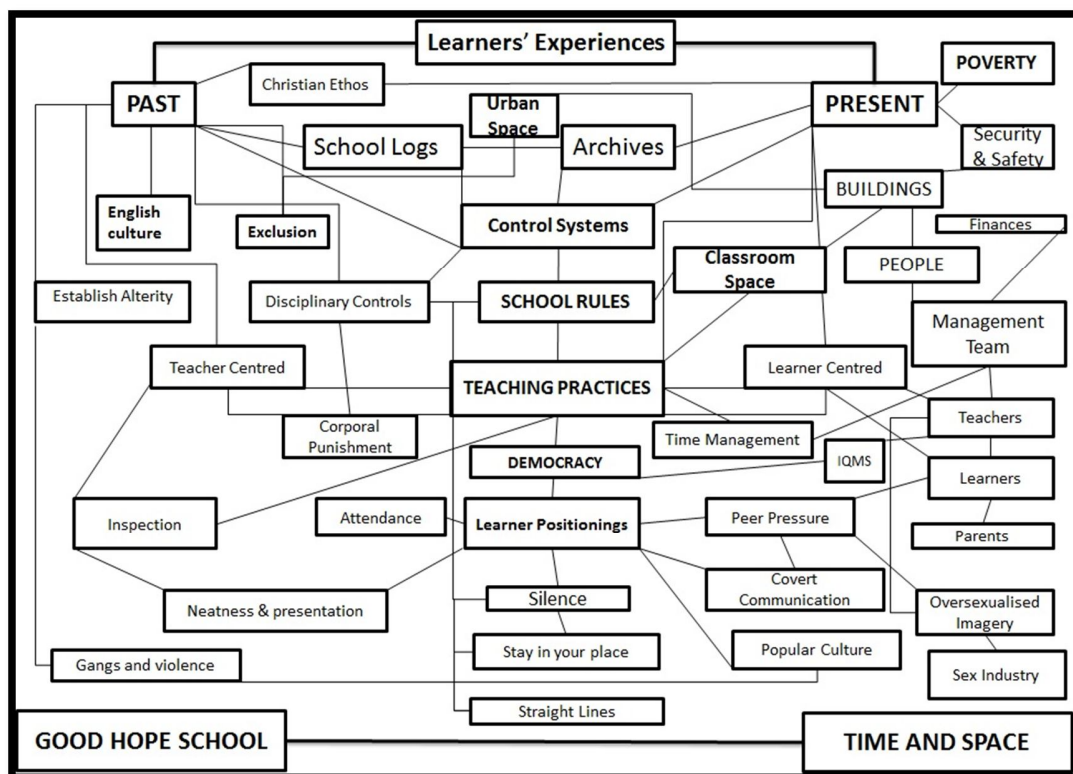


Figure 72: Networks of multiplied contexts of learners' lives

As was stated in chapter 2, actor network theory is not used in its traditional way but rather adapted as a toolkit to deal with a range of qualitative research techniques and unpacking complex data. It is used for exploring relational ties between networks and explaining how the networks act as a whole. The networks are constantly changing and in performance mode are held together by complex relationships. Some of those relationships are explicitly shown in the diagram above and further illustrated in the data presented in this thesis.

My task in this chapter is to network, and link with the theoretical and conceptual constructs, the arguments already put forward in the previous chapters that the learners' learning experiences as well as their positioning and trajectory in society relate to more than what is imbibed in the school and classroom and incorporate the totality of their lived experiences in the global and local. The purpose of the chapter, therefore, is to consider new ways of explaining learners' experiences within the classroom space, whilst cognisant of external factors that impact on learning. Lefebvre (1991b) suggests that walls and other physical boundaries give the appearance of the separation of space but what exists is "an ambiguous continuity" (p. 87). By formulating social space as interpenetrating and superimposing, Lefebvre (1991) exposes myriads of social relationships that can be disclosed through analysis.

As an ethnographic study, this thesis aims to reveal social phenomena in all their complexities. Actor network theory has been used as a toolkit to uncover that which is related to the way learners experience their education. Actor network theory helps to integrate the past and present while linking the social, educational and institutional in the lives of the learners.

The earlier chapters contextualised the educational experiences of the learners against the backdrop of their learning and social environments. This chapter sets out to connect the day to day learning experiences of the participants in the study to the social realities of their lives through the spatial theories posited by Lefebvre and other theorists as suggested by the multiperspectival approach introduced in Chapter Three. The day to day experiences of the learners are elucidated through theories and concepts that articulate a deeper understanding of why the learners experience education in the way they do. Like the study by Holland and Leander (2004), this study takes account of the fact that

positionings occur in particular historically specific times and places. For another, they show myriad points and timescales of positioning and they explore how the cultural elaborations or figurings of social positions travel from one locale to another.

The emphasis is on understanding the complex dynamics of the spatial terrain that impact on the learning of the child participants in this study. The analysis seeks to stitch together the myriad networks that the learners, at a school that regards itself as poor, traverse in their educational and living (social) environments. While the classroom is the space in which the learning is most closely monitored, it is the multiplied context of the learners' lives that informs the way the study is positioned. Networks of relationships emerge through multiple contexts in the global and local spaces. Fataar (2012) suggests the adoption of "a fully relational perspective trained on how learning and mobility come into being, or are positioned in a nexus of relations connected to the classroom" (p. 5). He further adds that grasping the way that learners "mobilise, network and put together the learning resources across space in the course of their learning activities is crucial to developing an understanding of their learning trajectories" (p. 5).

This study uses Foucault to explain normalisation across time through surveillance techniques that throw light on the schooling experiences of the learners. As explained in Chapter Three, in the context of school life everyday acts are so normalised through centuries of ritualised actions that perceptions operate within certain standardised practices.

Whilst in Chapters Five and Six I have provided a view of the school and classroom dynamics as well as the positioning of the learner in that space, in this chapter the school and classroom practices are subjected to in-depth analysis in order to better understand the nature of the learner and the learning experience.

The task of this chapter is to "characterise these networks in their heterogeneity, and explore how it is that they come to be patterned to generate effects like organizations, inequality and power" (John Law, 1992, p. 381). I attempt therefore to link the associations that have emerged in this ethnographic study and expose the relations most evident in the daily lived experiences of the learners. I start with looking at the minutiae evident in the local and conclude with how the global influences the local.

While relevant aspects of actor network theory are utilised in the analysis, it is the evidence gleaned from the data that is analysed.

7.2 Localising the Global Space⁴¹

Lefebvre (1991b) considers the principal contradiction to be found between “the capacity to conceive of and treat space on a global (or worldwide) scale on the one hand, and its fragmentation by a multiplicity of procedures or processes, all fragmentary themselves, on the other” (355). Whilst fractured, the global is also whole. The fractured nature is in keeping with the demands of “the division of labour and of the division of needs and functions” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 355). The global implies centrality from which power permeates and radiates norms and values outwards. This section attempts to invert this notion and considers the role of the local as a nexus from which experiences emanate. This does not discount global influences but wants to uncover how the local orients itself in view of the globalising of norms and practices.

Modern society, on a global scale, has been instrumental in regulating space and time. Lefebvre (1991b, p. 96) holds that time is concealed in space. The project of normalising time means that time is no longer visible. Lefebvre explains:

With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself (p. 95).

Everyday historical time, though visible in the school logs, is not apparent in the everyday practices of the school. The intention of this chapter is to demystify the historical impact on the present by understanding the role of history and tradition in normalising our perceptions. Lefebvre (1991b, p. 95) suggests that what we do is to bend our demands from below to suit commands from above. Thus our perceptions, though invariably directed by the dominant discourse, are perceived as our own due to inherent socialisation practices.

As shown in the previous chapter, when the walls of the classroom are metaphorically detached, the space is open to influences both near and far as well as past and present. Considering the

⁴¹ Title copied from Latour (2007b)

walls removed makes the space vulnerable to numerous influences and removes the perception of immobility or fixedness.

Chapter Two, in which the methodology used for this study was presented, I listed two of Law's (1992) general findings related to empirical translation, viz. durability and mobility. This chapter reveals the emerging relations that have to do with durability (ordering through time) and mobility (ordering through space – related to surveillance monitoring and control). I was also guided by Latour's (2007b) method of localising the global by creating a flat area from which to analyse. Its importance is in the discarding of the notion of hierarchy that enables the researcher to look at the *how* rather than the *what*. The claim is that through this process the social becomes fluid and collectable again. Localising the global has the advantage of creating the possibility to hone in on the mundane of the everyday. It is in the humdrum of routine that the authenticity of the local experience is most clearly shown.

By inverting the geographic space, in Chapter Four, I was able to look at who and what occupied the space at *Good Hope School* and particularly, how individual lives evolved within the life of the school. I outlined the unbeautiful spaces in which the learners lived and the way the school straddled the affluent bubbles of safety and the dangerous ghettoised zones. By inverting the view I attempted to create an oligoptica⁴² of the learning network at *Good Hope School*. Latour (2007b) suggests that oligoptica allows “sturdy but extremely narrow views of the (connected) whole”... “- as long as connections hold” (p. 181).

Latour (2007b) uses two technical terms to explain how the social is produced, *intermediary* and *mediator*. *Intermediaries* transport meaning or force without transformation while *mediators* transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry. In this chapter I select learner positioning, teacher and learner values, pathologising practices and language as some of the mediators of the learning experience. What we have seen and experienced in the previous chapters are subjected to further analysis.

⁴² Oligoptica serves as the opposite of Foucault's panopticon that allowed for total surveillance of inmates of a prison.

7.2.2 Embedding the Past in the Present

Wortham (2004) suggests that “to learn is to take up a new practice, to change one's position in a community” (p. 716). Learning can therefore change identity and the self. The learning a child receives positions her / him for becoming. Compromised learning positioning means that the child's life chances are reduced to the constraints embedded in the received learning.

The dramatic changes to the system of education in South Africa since 1994 have led to the learning systems in South African schools being reconfigured, creating feelings of disorientation for teachers, in particular, as well as for learners. In addition, social systems have shifted as a result of the fundamental political changes in the country. Population influx control has been abolished. There has been an influx of migrants and refugees from across the continent. *Good Hope School* now connects multiple social systems and places across the continent. The changed social and geographic spaces have a significant impact on the learning environment. Learners from across the continent and from diverse socio political systems now coexist in one classroom space for five hours each day.

Leander et al (2010) suggest

...the possible “selves” or identities of learners are cast in relation to the classroom - their possible and likely activities, their motivations, and their positions with respect to one another. Container-like visions of social spaces of learning - perspectives emphasizing categories, stasis, structures, and located representations over the mobilities of practices - are often recreated, despite attempts to disrupt them. Nevertheless, messy circulations and plural geographies - complex mobilities of practices - have always been on the move, however domesticated by our mappings of locales. Such are the geographies that increasingly haunt our past and current imagination.

Mobile fluidity in the classroom space provides greater opportunities for learning differently. Just as change disrupts the past, the past constantly intrudes on the new, ensuring continuity in the learning space. Those continuities are given support from limited expectations of what is possible as well as globalised views that fail to interrogate emerging social spaces of the learning environment. Change at first disrupts and then finds acceptance, becoming the norm through dominant practices made routine.

7.2.3 The Nature of the Learner

The nature of the learner evolves in the classroom and school space through both strong and weak associations that determine the way the learner's identity develops. While mundane everyday practices at the school obscured learners' identities and presented what was more acceptable socially, close observation of the learners who participated in this study revealed the ways they understood themselves differently in the home and school space. While not always aware of the changes they were going through, they preserved the privacy of home environments that did not match with what was acceptable in the school space. Conflicting identity constructs arose in the normalised environment of the school and home. Learners adapted their home and school identities accordingly.

In the previous chapter (Chapter Six) the concept of a veneer was suggested as the visible façade that hides complex laminations. The veneer of normalised practices creates an appearance of homogeneity whereas other world views exist and grow in the localised spaces lived by ordinary people. The learners, as the centre of the study, position themselves in the classroom space so that they appear to be learning. The complex terrains in which they experience learning are not readily acknowledged in the normalised space of the classroom and by the educational authority.

This thesis takes the view that in order to understand the Grade Six learners in this study, one has to take account of the history of the community, the legacy of past policies and the current situation of poverty and prejudice, as well as understand new polarisation of fragmented communities in ethnic ghettos. Meanings are appropriated from what learners themselves said about their own realities and how they viewed their situations as they interpreted their everyday lives.

The evidence in the previous chapters (Four, Five and Six) shows how the dangerous neighbourhood which learners traversed every day impacted on their experiences and identity construction. The children's daily experience of their social space was not only the ugliness of living in degraded conditions but also the influences from a sub culture of drug, sex and commercialised popular culture. Migrant communities, forcibly dislocated from war-torn countries across the continent, experienced further dislocation related to xenophobia. The

intersections between the lived daily life of ghetto poverty and the relatively safer, multi-cultural environment of the school created varied experiences for learners from diverse backgrounds.

The children who attended *Good Hope School* had a strong sense of identity and, like the learners in Nespor's (1997) study (reviewed by Alsweel), their identities were formed through an awareness of the attitudes to race, ethnicity, nationality, class and gender which operated through dominant discourses in their communities. Important in identity construction are images, symbols and styles that children imitate and manipulate to recreate themselves in order to make sense of their world (Alsweel, 2008). The abstraction of the body serves to reinstate dominant power relations and identities of race, class and gender and strengthens the production of "inequitable opportunities to learn for schooled bodies-in-place" (Leander et al., 2010, p. 338).

It is suggested by Leander et al (2010) that "childhood experience of and in space has changed dramatically between generations" (p. 349). Whereas previous generations enjoyed the outdoors (playing in the streets, yards and parks) the present generation spends more time indoors. This thesis supports that notion. The learners in this study were not only constrained because of changes in geographic urban space but because of the real dangers of living in a high density urban environment away from extended family networks. Nevertheless, learners did traverse those dangerous spaces as they travelled to and from school and while on errands for parents. Only some of the boys (from the poorer backgrounds) were allowed to play outside, although they had strict curfew conditions. Girls were generally monitored closely by parents. There was some indication that learners moved around in same age groups and occasionally visited spots habitually frequented and controlled by the more elite. Whilst the fear of street children, pimps and drug dealers represented a constraint on free association and outdoor play, the learners developed social skills and street-savvy particular to maintaining their own safety as they negotiated dangerous terrains. They often ran after-school errands for teachers to buy consumables at lower prices from vendors with whom teachers were unfamiliar. They displayed greater coping skills in their social environment than the learners who were transported from home to school by parents (Leander et al., 2010).

For the learners in this study, capitalism was perceived as the dream that creates the hope for a better future. The entrepreneurial spirit of the young learner who secretly sold sweets and chips from behind the lid of his desk represented a dream of wealth creation. Lana, Ike and Penny were ashamed of their poverty and hid their daily struggles from their classmates. Their shame was indicative of the self-blame poor people sometimes feel about their poverty in a context where the media celebrates consumerism and success is measured by the assets one accumulates. As members of the migrant community, some learners said their parents saw South Africa as a land of opportunity but for them coming here had just meant a life of suffering. Lana indicated that they could not return to their home country because of the shame they felt for not having attained the wealth they had thought they would. Lana's family lived a precarious existence as her mother's immigration papers were not in order and attempts to rectify the situation appeared futile. All the learners shared the hope that, through their education, they would attain the equivalent of the much vaunted 'American dream' and have a better future than their parents.

7.2.3.1 Positioning the Learner

The common view of the learner is of a child sitting at a desk in a classroom. Physical positioning of learners in the classroom space has not changed over the course of centuries. In spite of that visual imagery of stasis, the learners' positionings have changed quite dramatically. Technological advances have made it possible for teaching and learning to occur differently through media such as television and the internet. While apparently immobile, the learner can be transported out of the confines of the physical classroom space or home to anywhere – past, present and future. If we consider space through the Lefebvrian view of destroying the "appearance of solidity" (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 93) the learner is positioned differently in a localised global space. Such a perspective generates a view that considers "how a particular locale - a classroom, community, town, afterschool club, or website - is not an isolated container but is positioned in a *nexus of relations* to other such locales. The simultaneity of multiple locales, and the contact zones between them, become an expanded terrain of examination and evidence concerning learning and place" (Leander et al., 2010, p. 336).

Let us consider the learner in the classroom space as observed in this study. The learner's body is transformed under the control of careful classroom management and school practices (e.g. the

silence rule; lining up; regulation of toilet visits and remaining in one's seat) including surveillance techniques (Leander et al., 2010). Through these practices the child learner is constrained and transformed through predetermined normalisation techniques for behaviour and thinking.

Lefebvre (1991b) was firm about reinstating the body into philosophical thought:

Western philosophy has *betrayed* the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body. The living body, being at once 'subject' and 'object', cannot tolerate such conceptual division, and consequently philosophical concepts fall into the category of the 'signs of non-body'.

Simonsen (2005) suggests that for Lefebvre “the conceptions of body and space are inseparable both from their history and the concomitant critique and politics” (p. 2). He regards as important the notion of ‘body-in-space’. Lefebvre alludes to how artists like Picasso broke and dislocated at will and thereby created a rift between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. The liberated consciousness of the artists opened new vistas and perspectives, enhancing the dialectical transformation of space, form and creativity.

Lefebvre conceptualises a mirror image effect in the way each individual perceives an identity reflected through the global and the local. Each positioning of the mirror provides a new understanding and division which is both revealing and obstructive. Different intersections and sensory perceptions are reflected in the mirage created by objects in space:

One truly gets the impression that every shape in space, every spatial plane, constitutes a mirror and produces a mirage effect; that within each body the rest of the world is reflected, and referred back to, in an ever-renewed to-and-fro of reciprocal reflection, an interplay of shifting colours, lights and forms. A mere change of position, or a change in a place's surroundings, is enough to precipitate an object's passage into the light: what was covert becomes overt, while what was cryptic becomes limpidly clear (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 183).

Through the imagery of the mirror Lefebvre captures the essence of the duality of the body in space. Simonsen (2005) explains:

The most interesting thing about the mirror is therefore not so much the fact that it projects the 'subject's' image back on the 'subject' as the way in which it extends a repetition immanent in the body into space. He is interested in the social relationship between repetition and difference, in the conflictual way in which the production of social space is involved in the constitution of the self (p. 5).

The importance of this imagery for this study is to understand the way the learner relates to space and situates himself / herself in space. The mirage is viewed as a distorted or illusory image. This

thesis introduces the idea of a veneer or coating that enhances and creates acceptability to that image. Outwardly, both as an individual and in a public persona, the learner's complex and conflictual body image maintains a kind of acceptability defined by the dominant norms and values. Space is the intermediary through which identity is captured. The complexities are created at the intersections of body and social space (Simonsen, 2005).

Learners at *Good Hope School* positioned themselves differently as either involved or dislocated from their learning. Dislocation was seen in the numerous examples that showed disinterest as well as subversion of the learning environment. Teachers who attempted to introduce new ideas for arranging the classroom and engaging with students eventually capitulated to fit in with the dominant old ways so that they were absorbed as part of the old power/knowledge discourse. This view is supported by Leander et al (2010) who also suggest that space is constantly in motion and subject to emotive "bodies in interaction" (p. 341) that transform our understanding of a 'learning environment' from a homogeneous assembly to assemblages of learning that allow for multiple readings and interpretations.

The physical movement of a learner's body through the different terrains in the school space provided altered experiences of space. While learners found themselves constrained in the classroom space compared to the enjoyment of the open spaces during breaks, they still experienced the classroom as providing greater freedom than the restrictive unsafe spaces of their flat dwellings. School was a temporary escape from unsafe, constricted home environments. Moments of conflict in the classroom were ruptures in the safe bubble that the school represented. Other avenues of escape available within the classroom space were the imaginative routes provided by artistic endeavours, covert associations, subversion of rules and reading. This illustrated the constant motion of the learners in the classroom space.

Social networking is an important area in which learners configure their identities and position themselves. Leander et al (2010) voice the idea that "young people who spend time on the Internet are living and learning and moving in and through places and in ways that were not possible only two decades ago" (p. 362). Whilst the learners at *Good Hope School* had not yet reached this level of sophistication, largely due to the high costs of electronic gadgetry and

wireless connection, it will not take long for their young enquiring minds to bridge that gap, given their own aspirations (evident in their hand-drawn Facebook facsimile pages which they passed around), the growing penetration of mobile smartphones and other exponential technological advances.

Having a cell phone, and the type of cell phone one had, were signifiers of status and social positioning at the school. Learners made comments about the kind of cell phones teachers carried, thereby positioning teachers in the social hierarchy. This was an indication of their awareness of the social positioning accorded through cell phones in broader society. Leander et al (2010) suggest that mobile technologies are perhaps even more revolutionary than the technologies associated with the internet.

7.2.3.2 Learning Suppression

In his study, Fataar (2012) found that learning was suppressed by dynamics at the school that “reworked the children’s positioning in such a way that they assumed one-dimensional learning subjectivities emptied of productive and enriching possibilities” (p. 12). In his view those positionings, of the particular learners, led to learners’ failure in the educational arena of the school. This study suggests that the one dimensional learning positioning were learners’ way of adapting to what was expected of them. Their imaginings and creative engagement was suppressed in an environment that supported a traditional approach to learning and teaching.

Teaching is constrained by circumstances that limit how teachers deliver their educational mandate. While teachers are aware of the enormous disparities between the learners in the classroom, they “enact their pedagogical practices in the classroom in a homogenising manner” (Fataar, 2012, p. 13). What Fataar called “the homogenising pedagogies” (p. 13) of the teachers are important to understanding the way the learners in this study were positioned for success or failure in the classroom space. Learners were categorised in a way that either promoted or stymied their learning (depending on whether the learners were viewed positively or negatively). In a society still grappling with race and class-based issues, learners tend to be stereotypically positioned, at least initially, based on race, gender, nationality, language and class biases. The assumed positioning sometimes overlaps, creating multiple layers which are constantly changing

in accordance with different situations and relationships. While perceived through historically located lenses, the learners negotiate new hybridised identities that are representative of new cultural expressions. Fataar (2009b) submits that in order to successfully negotiate the spatiality of their living social spaces and their school environments, learners navigate the hybrid materials in their social world (race, religion and language). The learners in this study tended towards a mobile identity construction that was adaptable to different settings.

Learners sometimes suppressed their own learning in order to conform to the limited expectations of their teachers. This was illustrated by the example in Chapter Six of the learner, Andy, who chose to write a 'small story' rather than expound on his own vast imagination and knowledge of *Dragon Ball Z*. The evidence in this study also suggests that learners seldom challenged the views of teachers even when they thought that those views were incorrect. Learners placed great emphasis on regarding teachers as the only voice of knowledge. A study by Gonzalez et al (1993) indicates that learners bring their own 'funds of knowledge' into the learning environment but this is not acknowledged or understood by the teachers. This study supports that view.

Learners' navigations in the classroom space were experienced similarly to the engagement of the teacher with learners in Fataar's (2012) study where the teacher positioned learners as having high or low status and engaged with them accordingly. Learners' perception of their own worth, gleaned from interactions with teachers and fellow learners, led to self-suppression of learning if viewed negatively.

Exercise books were often indicators through which teachers judged learners. Written work which was orderly and neat was celebrated as 'good'. The value of neatness has been passed down over the decades of the school's existence and is laminated into the values promoted by the school. The valuing of neatness and uniformity above correctness suppresses independent learning as it conditions the way learners respond to and express their learning. Neatness and orderliness are important but when they are elevated at the expense of correctness, learning is undermined. In a study by Kos and Maslowski (2001) of the writing of second graders, they found that learners placed emphasis on good handwriting and correct spelling. Those values

conflicted with the value of ‘good ideas’ that the teacher in the classroom tried to promote when teaching writing. Likewise, by emphasising neatness over correctness, teachers at *Good Hope School* overemphasised the technicality of handwriting and compromised other important conceptual skills the learners needed to develop.

Learners were positioned through constant repetition by teachers and fellow learners about their worth. Such repetition reinforced notions that positioned the learner as capable or not. Wortham’s (2004) study shows how teachers and students establish categories of identity to define students. The repetitions become infused in the layering of learners’ identity formation. Leander et al (2010) suggest “The repetition, therefore, is not simply an effect of being located in numerous time - spaces, but an effect of the accrual or accumulation of particularly marked time - spaces that are collected and organized” (p. 341). The implication for the individual learner is a greater awareness of status and worth in the classroom. The learner translates repetitions into his/her identity construct and thus the classroom space shapes the learners’ identities and simultaneously the learners negotiate an understanding of who they are.

An appropriate example is the way Basil was treated. He was picked on by teachers and learners alike. His demeanour opened him up to ridicule. His defence mechanism of indulging in clownish games only made him more prone to mockery. His compensating behaviour led to further derision with no prospect of help. Teacher responses to Basil’s situation indicated they were overwhelmed by the difficulties they faced.

Davies and Hunt (1994) provide an interesting analysis of the way teachers respond to learners in their class and the effects of those responses on the learners. Teachers contribute to the way certain learners are marginalised and disregarded in the classroom. Teacher commentaries are imitated by learners and used to put classmates down when teachers are absent and certain learners play the monitoring role of the teacher. Through their remarks some teachers position learners outside of the learning group. Those learners interpret their exclusion as a license to engage in other activities. Learners who are defined in a certain frame have great difficulty overcoming prejudice on the part of teachers. Teachers thereby unconsciously aid their learners in suppressing their learning. Panofsky (2003) asserts, “social relations has been shown to be central in the experience of failure for many low-income students” (p. 1). A healthy

teacher/learner relationship is crucial to ensuring success for learning. Learners who are celebrated and encouraged learn easily. Learners like Basil who are defined as linguistically deficient, intellectually stunted and or deviant find their learning compromised.

The teacher's better social class positioning in relation to her learners impacts on learners developing self-identity. Further marginalisation in the classroom space aggravates that positioning. Panofsky (2003) suggests, "student teacher relations of learning that diverge widely in terms of meanings, values, activities, artefacts, agency and feelings contribute to the production of divergent student identities" (p. 14).

A further consideration for the suppression of learning is the multiplied contexts of learners' lives. Homogenising the learners disregarded the heterogeneity of their experiences. Both attitudes of tender-heartedness and indignation towards learners compromised their learning. Important too were learners' abilities to overcome personal circumstances. While many shared a belief in a better future, few tackled the hurdles that compromised their learning. Learners with strong personalities and clear goals appeared to be better prepared for the hurdles they had to face in their everyday lives. Learners learned to adapt their school profile to fit in with teacher expectations. Identities were therefore in a constant state of flux. Disruptions occurred when street smarts were displayed in the school space.

7.2.3.3 Laminations

The findings in this study have supported the idea that when we look at an object or person we tend to see what is immediately in front of us and do not interrogate what is behind the façade or what parts make up the whole. As explained in Chapter Two, actor network theorists refer to this as *punctualization*. It is a process or effect and implies "that no version of the social order, no organization, and no agent, is ever complete, autonomous, and final" (John Law, 1992, p. 386). The intention of this analysis is therefore to "explore and describe local processes of patterning, social orchestration, ordering and resistance" (Law, 1992, p. 386) operating in the lives of the learners in this study. Actor network theorists refer to this process as *translation*. Law (1992) explains:

This, then, is the core of the actor-network approach: a concern with how actors and organizations mobilise, juxtapose and hold together the bits and pieces out of which they are composed; how they are sometimes able to prevent those bits and pieces from following their own inclinations and making off; and how they manage, as a result, to conceal for a time the process of translation itself and so turn

a network from a heterogeneous set of bits and pieces each with its own inclinations, into something that passes as a punctualized actor.

Stanforth (2006) explains translation:

It also permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors they have mobilized. To translate is to displace, but it is also to express in one's own language what others say and want: it is to establish oneself as a spokesperson.

In this study translation is also about how learners' lives are positioned in their learning environment through practices which produce normalisation and alienation situated in time and space. The translations through different mediators of the changes in the post 1994 educational landscape have meant complex interpretations of those changes. As Stanforth (2006) explains, "this shift from principle to practice allows the vague notion of power to be treated not as a cause of people's behaviour but as a consequence of an intense activity of enrolling, convincing and enlisting" (p. 39). Each change agent has different objectives that influence the way the translations are mediated. The learner experience confronts the translations in the geographic and social space. They find ways to normalise their existence in that space and fit in with what they perceive as authentic ways to be. Relationships of power, privilege, disadvantage and marginalisation are concealed beneath the visible veneer. What are visible are the effects of the power relationships. Translation is dependent on whether the concealment is made visible so that it may be confronted or ignored.

The laminations are not just a product of what Fataar (2012) calls "teacher dominated processes" (p. 16) but the entire experience of learning that is constrained and controlled within historically and pedagogically determined practices. Those practices are situated in the way teachers engage with their pedagogical mandate. Preconceived notions of learners' abilities provide fewer opportunities for learners to improve. Learners position themselves and respond according to the expectations of the teacher. As the laminations thicken, their suppressed learning positions are hardened and opportunities to change are restricted and difficult. While the teachers play a decisive role in the thickening of the laminations of the learning process and are implicated in the learning suppression suggested in this study, their specific involvement requires a different study.

7.2.4 The Nature of the Learning Experience

Teacher and learner attitudes, infringement of externalised priorities, poor assessment management, cultural codification, alterity, constraints of discipline as well as subversion of discipline – all these work through a network of contexts to suppress the learning learners should experience in the classroom and the school. This is in spite of an environment that at face value is conducive to learning and teaching.

The surveillance techniques used in this study revealed that the subversion of discipline that learners engaged in was also the means through which they undermined their own learning. Not following rules and instructions placed them at a disadvantage academically. They thereby confirmed the views of those who believed them incapable of higher achievement. Alternatively, some learners did not see the rules as being in their own interest. Their engagement with other activities suggests deeper psychological pathologies, the exploration of which falls outside of the scope of this thesis. The simple answer may be that the subject matter did not interest them. If they encountered difficulties they tended to switch off rather than engage more deeply. Whilst teachers sacrificed their break times to attend to learners who were having difficulties, the learners saw this as a punishment rather than an opportunity to catch up.

In addition to the layers of positioning that constantly changed in different situations and relationships outlined above, the nature and texture of the learning experience was mediated through values and pathologies situated in time and space. The dominance of English located the majority of the learners in complex relationships to their learning. There were tensions in the normalised environment of the school that related to how the learners were understood. Teachers acted as intermediaries who transported meanings inherited through their own socialisation and world view and concretised in the dominant discourse of the school.

7.2.4.1 Values and Moral Codes

According to Fallona (2000) “Values are defined as preferences in all realms of life” (p. 682). The literature indicates that there are many interpretations of what constitutes values. In this study I consider values as incorporating moral judgements. The universal values assume a common understanding of (amongst other things) truth, honesty and fairness. The learners showed that they had a different understanding of such concepts. For instance, learners displayed

a different understanding about honesty to that of their teacher. When the teacher told them that honesty meant returning something that one found that did not belong to one, some learners disagreed. For such learners finding the object was their luck. A learner admitted to spending a sum of money she found and had no guilt about it because she perceived it as her luck. The teacher tried to instil a feeling of guilt by telling a story of how someone had got into trouble because he had lost his school fees. Although the learners appeared to share the teacher's concern (at that moment), it is arguable whether they all believed that it was better to be honest. Teachers demanded that learners tell the truth. Learners agreed that they would but I observed that they understood truth differently and truth, by the teacher's definition, became an easy casualty when learners were faced with the consequences of telling the truth. For some learners the truth was what they could make the teacher believe to be true. In one case that I observed, a learner lied blatantly to the teacher, telling her that he had given her his essay shortly after he had divulged to me that he had not done it. Another more common occurrence was learners telling teachers that they understood the lessons and then immediately seeking help from their classmates.

Truth assumed many dimensions in the classroom space. The learners understood the teacher's truth but rationalised lying as a situational ethic. This supports the findings in the study by van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg and Out (2010) that "moral behaviour is largely situation-specific" (p. 1). In terms of Boltanski and Thévenot (2000) the teachers and learners appear to have developed different orders of worth.

The prioritising of moral values in the school space was observed by Hendricks (2007) in her study at a farm school in the Western Cape. Like the values taught at *Good Hope School*, the values were "reflected in the way people communicated, the code of discipline upheld and in the interactional dynamics. Posters with little sayings reflecting values were displayed on classroom walls" (Hendricks, 2007, p. 87). Important to note was the shared vision of the teachers and management team (despite religious differences) of what constituted good moral teaching. Through the observance of a moral teaching code the teachers upheld a culture of teaching and learning and through that the school nurtured in their learners the dream of a better future. Evidence that moral teaching practices were challenged in the daily living experiences of the

learners has been presented. Yet, despite those difficulties, the class teacher persisted in her endeavours to motivate learners through a system of games and rewards.

Alongside learners' selective practice of truth was their interpretation of fairness. Learners made strong judgements against those they considered unfair. Unfairness fell into many categories and was articulated in particular when learners were aggrieved because they felt that they had been wronged in some way. Teachers who were harsh (to the extent of even being abusive) but applied harsh rules equally to all learners were considered fair. Teachers who were lenient but applied rules differently were considered unfair. Learners' justifications for fairness also related to their experiences of acceptance or marginalisation from particular teachers. Views of fairness, as far as the learners were concerned, were therefore predicated upon the situation in which it happened as well as the person involved, and could be changed willy-nilly.

Tobin (2005), in his study, found that it was important that teachers connect with their learners through establishing common interest. This was a strategy adopted by some teachers at *Good Hope School* but it was sometimes used by learners to misdirect the teacher and indulge the teacher's interest so that they could avoid getting down to work. A teacher who tried to develop rapport with learners by reflecting on his own childhood poverty in a humorous way was able to establish closeness with the learners. However, when learners could not afford to buy batteries for his project the same teacher showed little sympathy. This was the situation with many teachers who fluctuated between being compassionate and involved and being bossy and authoritarian. It was as disciplinarians that teachers most strongly viewed their positioning in the classroom space.

Compassion was a universal value strongly promoted in the school environment. Teachers played the role of educators as well as pastoral caregivers as described by Fataar (2012). Their educator roles were sometimes defined through their roles as bearers of compassion. Fataar (2012) suggests that "teachers are distracted from their pedagogical tasks by having to respond to challenges associated with the pastoral care or social welfare requirements of their students" (p. 12). Their compassionate roles included providing learners with pastoral care as well as psychological guidance. These are roles that their pedagogical training would have dealt with only cursorily.

As was shown in Chapters Three and Four, the school encouraged compassion as a core principle. As a recipient of charity the school was sensitised to extending its mandate of compassion to all in need. Yet at times the principal bemoaned the fact that learners got too much and therefore did not appreciate it sufficiently. Those who did not show appreciation were perceived as taking assistance for granted. When there was no gratitude expressed the compassion was compromised. This is part of what has been called the grammar of normality by Boltanski (1999, p. 35) associated with an ordinary sense of fairness in the judgements made by people in everyday life.

The school, on the other hand, was always particular about expressing gratitude as it perceived it as the only option it had for acknowledging the far reaching assistance it received. The academic programme was often curtailed by unscheduled school assemblies where gratitude was appropriately expressed to the benefactors by the school body as a whole. These public relations exercises, no doubt, strengthened on-going relationships with donors and benefactors. It was the intention of the school's discourse that gratitude be extended to benefit humanity as a whole as was graphically illustrated in the movie *Pay it Forward*⁴³. The learners were schooled into the idea of gratitude for everything they received.

The expectation of gratitude was extended to the relationship between the teacher and learner. The learner who failed to fulfil a teacher's expectations was deemed to be ungrateful for the service of teaching the teacher had given. The expected gratitude and respect from the learner was also an acknowledgement of that debt and an understanding and acceptance of the learners' class and social alienation with respect to teachers. The idea of comparison and calculation of worth is aligned to the Christian context of *agape* (love) that Boltanski and Thévenot (2000) say is "constructed in opposition to that of justice because ... Without a calculus, it is impossible to make the account, to bring together what I have given and what I have received" (p. 228).

Kant's (2008) attachment of moral significance to gratitude is relevant here. The gratitude expected from learners was largely about the duty of respect. Smit and Timmons (2011) wrote

⁴³ *Pay It Forward* is a 2000 American film drama based on the novel of the same name by Catherine Ryan Hyde.

about the complexity of gratitude as explained by Kant. They suggest that, according to Kant, the placement of obligation for a duty performed removed the true benefit from the action. Benefit could only be earned if the doer was “altruistically motivated” (p. 299). In Kantian terms (Kant, 2008; Smit & Timmons, 2011) the teachers’ expectations of gratitude for a duty they were obliged to perform was misplaced. Nevertheless, the strong sense that emerges from the relationship between teachers and learners is related to their different social class positioning in the instance of expected gratitude.

Like the study by Solomons and Fataar (2011) this study raises “important philosophical and pedagogical questions about what values are and which values should be prioritized” (p. 224). Contradictory notions of interpretation of values are indications that further investigation is required in this field of study.

7.2.4.2 Pathologising Behaviour

Foucault (2003) cites the second figure in the genealogy of abnormality as “the individual to be corrected” (p. 57) and later as “the individual who cannot be integrated within the normative system of education” (p. 332). Normalisation has meant, within the institution of the school, that that which does not fit in with the normative discourse is relegated to the pathological.

A feature of education in the 21st century is a “trend toward pathologizing behavior that is unusual, challenging or extreme” (Probst, 2006, p. 487). Teachers in more privileged schools are supported by a variety of specialists like psychologists, special education teachers and social workers (among others) to identify and manage a range of educational, personality and behavioural difficulties experienced by their learners. Teachers at *Good Hope School* did not have those support structures. The school counsellor served the needs of the whole school population of over 1400 learners and was expected to deal with all matters that were perceived as social deviance as well as social welfare concerns. A ‘special class’ served the needs of learners whom teachers could not cope with in the normalised classroom space. Teachers were expected to deal with all matters that arose in their classrooms. As Tait (1999) remarks, “teachers are now to be regarded as de-facto therapists” (p. 3).

The way the teacher manages the multitude of responsibilities can be summed up in the already stated normalising processes of “regulating the behaviour and bodily demeanour of large numbers of children while simultaneously supplying them with the various skills and capacities related to appropriate self-regulation” (Tait, 1999, p. 6). As indicated, the process of developing morally upright learners was given priority at *Good Hope School*. According to Tait (1999) pathologising behaviour is part of a larger strategy of social management and control in the school space. It is therefore part of the school’s function to shape “acceptable personalities and modes of conduct” (Tait, 1999, p. 5).

Part of the strategy to normalise learner behaviour at *Good Hope School* was through the process of pathologising certain behaviours considered detrimental to learner development. Crucial to the project of normalisation and control was the domination of a Christian ethos and the regulation of the behaviour and bodily demeanour of the learners for the purposes of appropriate self-regulation. Under the behaviours that were pathologised were those that did not fit in with dominant norms, like the over-sexual imagery evident in teachers’ description of learners’ dress styles, dance and behaviour as well as gendered notions of femininity. Inattention, disrespect, disobedience are no longer just regarded as misbehaviour but are deemed abnormal under certain conditions. It is true that problematic behaviours in children are not necessarily indicators of a psychosocial disorder (Probst, 2006). However, by labelling behaviour as abnormal or pathological within the school/classroom space, the behaviour assumes a different connotation that suggests the need for specialist intervention to rectify that which is considered abnormal.

Sexuality workshops at *Good Hope School* focused on the traditional method of pathologising sexuality alongside the predominant view of health risks and moral shame, and failed to respond effectively to “the interactive relationship that exists between social context and everyday life” (Shoveller, Johnson, Langille, & Mitchell, 2004, p. 486). The over sexualised imagery that was portrayed in Chapter Six was an indication of how certain behaviours were pathologised at *Good Hope School*. Children’s sexuality was mediated through complex social practices situated in time and space. An important part of growing up is about engaging in the process of coming to terms with one’s sexuality. It is in their inter-personal relationships that children construct such

meaning, looking to their social contexts for clues about what constitutes acceptable sexual behaviour (Shoveller et al., 2004).

In their investigation of sexual behaviour Shoveller et al (2004) found that there were two central processes that alienated young people in their attempts to come to terms with their sexual behaviour and their social contexts: “(1) the pathologizing of sex and (2) the silencing of meaningful discussion about sex” (p. 479). In addition they refer to the association of sexual behaviour with a culture of shame. Their analysis drew on Foucault’s (1978) understanding of perversion that led them to conclude that “pathology and silence engulfed young people in a climate of sex-based shame as they attempted to make sense of their own sexual development” (Shoveller et al., 2004, p. 485).

Historically, according to the findings in this thesis, the notion of an over sexualised group was directed at the women from St Helena who were condemned in the 19th century by the local police superintendent. In this instance the notion carried racial overtones. Such racial overtones were not explicit in teacher views at *Good Hope School*. Many teachers, however, referred to their previous racial schools where they did not encounter such practices, making the inference of a racialised view more explicit. The predominant notion of racial tolerance and the encouragement of multiculturalism rendered such racialised views largely invisible.

During the study, an idea that was expressed to me about sexual experimentation as an outcome of sex education reinforced the notion that sex amongst children is perceived as evil, to be hidden and kept out of the schooling environment. The associative abnormality label and strategies of silencing sexual discourse entrenches stereotypical notions of sex as immoral and perverse. This view is also reflected in the views of teachers studied by Chambers et al (2004) “that girls should not know about ‘these things’ because it may encourage them to be sexually active too soon” (p. 570). This notion is part of the popular view that sexual agency amongst girls is dangerous.

Teachers at *Good Hope School* were sometimes shocked by the openness with which girls spoke about sexual encounters because they (the teachers) said they (the girls) showed no shame. A girl who insisted on attending school even though she was visibly pregnant was also labelled as

having no shame. The strong discourse that attaches shame to girls' sexual behaviour entrenches notions of gendered culpability and subordination of girl learners. As Chambers et al noted, "a gender-specific treatment of teenage sexual morality" is at the root of the teachers' views. The attachment of shame to the sexual behaviour of girls was also found in a study by Puri and Busza (2004) who state:

Disclosure of pre-marital sex was a terrifying prospect, associated with tremendous shame and public humiliation. Girls felt repercussions more acutely, and framed them within wider internalized guilt at having strayed outside social norms... (p. 150)

The perceived lack of shame on the part of the learners at *Good Hope School* indicated a different understanding of their sexuality. The freedom with which they disclosed sexual behaviour indicates that what was once considered shameful had become part of what was termed a 'new normal' discourse. It is true that many learners were still constrained by normalised notions of acceptable sexual behaviour. However, on many fronts the sexual lives of young teenagers disregarded the teachings of their parents and teachers. Such learners were mediating their sexual identities differently. The resultant conflict was evident at *Good Hope School*.

7.2.4.3 Language as a Mediator of Learning

Another mediator of the learning environment that impacts on the learning experience is language. The findings indicate that English predominates and learners who are second or third language English speakers are greatly disadvantaged by having their languages subordinated to English. I would argue that learners' language identities are pathologised in the school environment in the sense that language identities are deemed to need corrective action. While *Good Hope School* does not ban the speaking of indigenous languages, as do some schools, learners admit that they are encouraged to converse in English even in their home environments, relegating their mother tongues to a secondary status in the language discourse of the home and school. The subordinate status of languages other than English is indicative of the way the identities of second and third language speakers of English are pathologised. According to Dudley-Marling and Lucas (2009), "the representation of students' language and culture as deficient contributes to student alienation that some see as the root cause of high levels of school failure in non-middle-class communities" (p. 368). Further, the deficit based explanations for

language difficulties “blame the victims of poverty for their academic and economic struggles” (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009, p. 364). By labelling learners’ language difficulties as deficiencies the ultimate responsibility for language failure is blamed on parents who pass on to their children inadequate language and flawed culture (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009, p. 369). The deficiency model fails to recognise the rich linguistic and cultural capital in the lives of children from diverse places of origin across Africa.

Even if given a choice of having their child taught in the medium of an indigenous language it is likely that parents would choose English as the medium instruction as they perceive it to be the international language of opportunities. Competency in English is believed to open more doors than the regional mother tongue. Parents’ choices are based on their present lived realities. Very often their own inability to communicate in English has hamstrung their own advancement in society. The argument for acknowledging the functionality of English rather than promoting the idea that English serves the interest of maintaining a colonial mind-set and slave mentality is contradictory to present day academic discourse discussed in the previous chapter.

7.2.4.4 Silences and Silencing in the Classroom

In Chapter Six the ‘silence rule’ that operated in the classroom space was explained. Silence is a mediator of learning in the classroom. Silence ensures that the teacher remains the authoritative voice of knowledge. Silence is also about discipline and control. Leander (2002c) contests the notion that correlates “speaking with power and silence with a lack of power” (p. 196) and suggests that silence is much more complex. At *Good Hope School* both verbal and non-verbal silencing strategies emanated from both teachers and learners.

Leander (2002c) suggests, “silencing is achieved in interaction through processes of social space, with a focus on narrating social scenes through talk and producing embodied spaces” (p. 199). The earlier reference to learners’ selective truth telling could also be equated to responding to silencing strategies emanating unconsciously from their teachers. Learners understood that their untruthful response about whether they understood was an acknowledgement of the teacher’s hegemonic position. Admission about their difficulties could result in further accusations about inattention or stupidity. The social interaction between the teacher and learners is dependent on

the situation created in the moment through the interplay of identity, positioning and social space. As Leander (2002c) suggests, “social relations are continuously spatialized in interaction” (p. 199).

In the classroom space there were many learners who seldom spoke to teachers and who had great difficulty in speaking when spoken to. Mandy, a Zimbabwean girl, seldom spoke in class. In her interview she revealed her longing to go home and her inability to fit into the local space at home and school. Much of her communication with other learners was non-verbal, through hand signals and gestures that displayed her irritation. She had been made to repeat an academic year because she had missed some months of schooling in Zimbabwe when teachers went on strike. She was therefore a year older than most learners in her class. Even so, her academic ability was poor. She sat close to me during observations and I noticed that she seldom filled in answers on worksheets and instead waited for teachers to provide answers. Her demeanour in class was of a person who was constantly at odds with those around her. She seldom smiled and appeared to have no friends. She revealed in her interview that she hated the impoverished state her family was forced to live in and believed that they would be better off in Zimbabwe where other family members could support them. Mandy’s learning difficulties contributed to her silence and consequently her teachers hardly noticed or engaged with her.

Nelisiwe, Ossie and Musi were other learners who were silenced in the classroom space. Nelisiwe surprised the boy learners with her great talent for drawing *Dragon Ball Z* characters. Teachers seldom interacted with her and she hardly ever contributed to classroom exchanges. It was only on the netball court that I saw both Mandy and Nelisiwe become animated and excited. On return to class they once again assumed the demeanour of disengagement with those around them. Ossie was the best athlete in the class and revelled in the glory of the moment during the athletics period. In the classroom he reverted to his silent demeanour. Whilst Mandy, Nelisiwe and Ossie were accorded invisible status, Musi’s silence was interpreted by teachers as him being uncooperative.

It is not common to interpret silence and consequently “we tend to endorse rather than query the transactivating nature of silence” (Li, 2005, p. 71). Learners’ silences are interpreted as indicative

of a lack of knowledge but could also be about using silence to suppress learning. There is evidence of such resistance in this study.

7.2.4.4.1 Silencing Racial Discourse

The issue of race and racism has been an important part of the school's history but has today been largely laminated into the fabric of school life. In the present time race is hardly ever spoken about and the outwardly non-racial discourse of the school silences racial prejudice. Yet, incidences in the classroom indicate that notions of race have been largely forced underground. An earlier reference was made to implied racism seen in the way sexuality was viewed by teachers. There was further evidence of silenced racial constructs on the part of both learners and teachers. For instance, a teacher was asked by learners what his race was. He avoided the question and told them he was a human being but later told learners that some people call him a 'coloured' but he preferred not to have a racial label as it did not define who he was. Learners were confused because he spoke Zulu well. In their racial constructs language was closely aligned to racial profiling. Another 'white' male teacher told me that 'black' learners were loud because it was part of their culture. In class he instructed learners to call him 'baas'⁴⁴. The learners obliged and were unaware of the underlying apartheid discourse evident in the title. 'Baas' is loaded with notions of 'white' dominance. What the teacher intended with such a title can only be speculated but I personally felt the pain of a word that wounds, as described by Applebaum (2003), when I heard the learners addressing the teacher in the classroom space. The teacher's attempt to exert power over the learners through an apartheid discourse was lost because the learners did not share his racist repertoire. It is highly unlikely that the school would condone the use of such terminology by the staff member and it is also very likely that other staff members would be offended and pained by such directly racist terminology. Important to note is the continuing racist discourse that operates at a subliminal level.

Race at *Good Hope School* is hidden behind what has become a more acceptable notion of nationalising identity. Race categorisation is silenced but national identities are used for

⁴⁴ An Afrikaans term that means boss.

labelling, stereotyping and in certain cases pathologising behaviour. A view expressed by the principal that the children from Rwanda and Burundi were more hardworking than learners from Congo (DRC) and South Africa is an example of this. However, in the classroom I visited the majority of migrant children were Congolese and I found it difficult to differentiate between them and other children in the class.

Silencing racial terminologies operating at *Good Hope School* served to suppress racial intolerance but resulted in hiding racial stereotypes that continued to operate in less tangible ways. Alongside the silencing of racial discourse was the silencing of notions of gender inequality. While teachers outwardly supported gender equality and used terms like ‘human-made’ rather than ‘man-made’, in their interactions with learners they gave strong heterosexual messages of how to act like a boy or a girl. Such notions were also evident in sexualised imagery that blamed girls.

7.3 Global Influences on the Local

This thesis looks at the minutiae of the everyday experiences of learners and how their educational difficulties stemmed from multiplied contexts of their lives. Their learning was compromised at many levels. In the previous section (7.2) I looked at the local through tunnelled lenses that revealed the complex realities through which learners learn.

This thesis supports the view that there is a dialectical relationship between the local and the global, referred to as ‘glocalisation’⁴⁵. The local assumes new adaptations of the global trends. For instance, in the educational arena global trends in commercialising and commodifying education have particular adaptations in the local environment of *Good Hope School*. Poor children are trapped into positions of suppressed learning with socio-economic hardships that condemn them to remaining disadvantaged. Their immobility arising from their poverty means that they cannot attain their full human potential. The country in turn is constrained from its full

⁴⁵ The term “glocalization” is a newly coined blend of globalization and localization refers to a concept to describe individual, group, organization, product or service that reflects not only global standard but also local one (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glocalization>)

growth as it cannot tap into its human capital lost through the inadequate education of its children. The notion that inequality is an insurmountable hurdle creates desperation and causes people to acquiesce with learning which is to their personal detriment. For instance, parents compromise on the language issue as they want to ensure that their children overcome what they perceive to be structural obstacles to their advancement in an increasingly globalised world.

The real extent of social inequality remains largely invisible. Parents continue to believe their children are receiving an equitable education and attribute any deficiencies to an assumption that their children do not work hard enough.

The laminations revealed in this thesis are the means through which that which is responsible or contributing to learning suppression remains hidden from view. It is the contention of this thesis that much of what is seen and perceived is a veneer that obfuscates the more brutal and contentious. The globalised world, while the primary mediator of the way education has evolved in the current period, remains largely invisible in the analysis of the learning experiences and requires closer consideration.

How does the global create inequalities that result in inadequate education for the poor? I try to reassemble the threads of the argument made in this thesis.

Latour (2007b) cautions, "...no sociology can be content with 'just describing' associations, and nor can it simply enjoy the spectacle of the sheer multiplicity of new connections" (p. 259). He acknowledges that there is a conflict that emerges between critical sociology and being politically relevant, as well as between society and the collective. The project is to tie together the associations and reassemble them in a satisfactory form. The renewal strategy aims to reinvigorate sociology and counter the overwhelming assumed superiority of western ideas.

7.3.1 The Commodification of Education

Whilst in pre 1994 South Africa the agenda for education amongst the oppressed was the implementation of free and equitable education for all, the present government has since been able to popularise the notion of the 'the user pays'. Its response to opposition to this has been to give greater financial support to poorer schools. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), in their study titled *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, suggest that there has been a "major re-ordering of the

systems and values that are considered to be relevant and legitimate for the assessment of people, things and situations” (p. 171) that have injected a sense of what is deemed fairness into the world. Through that reordering of values, and notions of fairness the positioning of popular sentiments has shifted. Thus, the notion of supporting those in need to a greater extent gets support for the alleviation of the suffering poor and the implementation of a free and equitable education system appears unattainable.

Good Hope School falls into the category of schools that get support from the government but are expected to raise their own finances for additional teachers, administrative support and day-to-day running expenses. Schools which charge higher school fees have the financial capacity to meet international standards. This commodification of education is an example of how global trends are immersed into local contexts through a process of glocalisation. In the South African context commodification of education has resulted in the emergence of a dual school system that produces divergent educational outcomes reflected in the economic divide in the country.

This thesis highlights the glaring effects of inequalities in the educational arena which mirror national socio-economic inequalities. In the introductory chapter to this thesis it was argued that there are two education systems operating in South Africa. The bimodality recognised in the education system is explained as follows:

- (1) For whatever reason, historically disadvantaged schools remain dysfunctional and unable to produce student learning, while historically advantaged schools remain functional and able to impart cognitive skills;
- (2) The constituencies of these two school systems are vastly different with the historically Black schools still being racially homogenous (i.e. Black, despite the abolition of racial segregation) and largely poor; while the historically White and Indian schools serve a more racially diverse constituency, although almost all of these students are from middle and upper class backgrounds, irrespective of race (Spaull, 2012, pp. 5-6).

Spaull (2012) has shown that the actual situation regarding the performance of poor schools is hidden behind a veneer. The Department of Basic Education presents national averages that obfuscate the real figures pertaining to the performance of learners who are part of what has been called the ‘second economy’. The veneer is achieved by reporting on both school systems as one and thereby having the 25% better performing schools raise the averages of all schools. When the 75% poorer performing schools are separated from the national figures, the results are more representative of the actual national situation. The divide between the better performing and

poorer performing schools is starker than the official figures show. It illustrates the dire consequences of inequality.

Good Hope School is celebrated in every day discourse as a school that provides easy access to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing them with the education that was previously only available to ‘white’ learners. The veneer through which the school is celebrated obscures the semi-dysfunctional environment in which it operates. My study indicates that the school is no longer able to provide the standard of education it did before it opened its doors to all learners. Financial constraints have crippled the school’s resources and it exists as a shadow of its past. Yet from my observations I believe that teachers at *Good Hope School* work as hard as teachers at the more celebrated former ‘Model C’ schools but do not get the same results. According to the Annual National Assessments (ANA) results for 2011 and 2012 (Appendix 9, Appendix 10) at *Good Hope School*, learner performance in mathematics deteriorates the longer a learner remains at the school. The best results are in Grade 1 and the worst are in Grade 6. Results in English are not as stark but are nevertheless worrying.

Unlike the majority of historically disadvantaged schools, *Good Hope School* has a history as a privileged school. Its entrance into a semi-dysfunctional state is related to its opening the doors of learning to all with resultant compromises to the learning environment. Schools that limited access to poorer learners remain part of the better performing 25% of schools. This is an indication that financial stability does contribute to the better functionality of schools.

Commodification of education in the post 1994 period has affected *Good Hope School* directly and forced it to make uncomfortable choices. Those choices have placed it in a financially vulnerable position and caused it to move from a position of privilege from which it served the needs of ‘white’ learners to being a school that is open to everybody and largely caters for those living in the urban slums adjacent to the school. By losing its economic capital it has also compromised the learning environment and the academic capital it had previously accumulated as a ‘white’ school. The school is now part of the 75% of poorer performing schools. Decentralisation strategies for increased democratisation of education in the micro spaces of the school increased the burden on school management teams ill prepared for the enormity of the

tasks they faced. The school has been forced into a reactionary financial role that compromises its optimal running.

7.3.2 Difficulties in Changing Pedagogical Practices

In his study of traditional African modes of education, Omolewa (2007) shows how the traditional African education system prepared each person in the community for his/her role in society. Before the colonisers reached Africa a viable education system existed. The introduction of the formalised western education system disrupted that traditional system and introduced a bureaucratic-authoritarian model that promoted the supremacy of western thought and culture. Today the pedagogical choices that are presented to teachers continue to promote ideas that are favoured in the western world without due consideration for local realities and difficulties.

Good Hope School teachers were part of the many varied strategies implemented by the Department of Education in the post 1994 period to change the authoritarian, teacher-centred design of education. The result of the many changes was a blend of varied teaching styles and approaches in the classroom space. While the strategies of the Department of Education were directed towards child-centred learning, the teachers continued to use the techniques which gave them the greatest disciplinary control in the classroom. While teacher-centred approaches dominated at *Good Hope School*, efforts were made to include more democratic child-centred teaching. It has been suggested that dramatic curriculum changes cause confusion so that teachers are uncertain about their pedagogical role. They therefore revert to the familiar, conservative approaches to teaching. Much more investigation is needed to understand the complexities in teacher pedagogical practices. Kain (2003) recognises those complexities and states, “The merger of practical realities and theoretical complexities tends to collapse the binary of teacher-centered / student-centered classrooms, in truth the very idea of a “centered” classroom” (p. 104).

Fataar’s (2012) study showed that “teachers use didactic, ‘chalk and talk’ pedagogical styles and rely almost exclusively on the textbook as a teaching resource” (p. 12). Tabulawa (1998, p. 250) also found that in spite of changes towards learner-centred pedagogy, teachers in Botswana used didactic, authoritarian methods that did not recognise the learners’ abilities to construct

knowledge. He reported that teachers preferred to use what Freire (1972) described as the banking concept of education, where learners were treated as receptacles for knowledge, rather than the progressive learner-centred teaching. It is important to note that in both instances (Fataar and Tabulawa) the studies were conducted in less advantaged schools.

Tabulawa (2009) critiques child-centred teaching as designed to fit in with the needs of the global economy for a worker who is “multiskilled, adaptable, and flexible” (p. 88). He argues that “the pedagogy is an ideological outlook, a worldview intended to develop a preferred kind of society and people” (2003, p. 7). It has been suggested by Guthrie (2013) that formalised teaching practices as opposed to progressive (western-based, learner-centred) teaching practices suit the situation found in Africa. He uses the studies by Tabulawa (1997, 1998) as referents for his assertion of failure of ‘developing’ country classrooms to “generate a paradigm shift ... from formalism to progressivism in primary and secondary schools” (2013, p. 121). While this study has noted the slowness of change in teacher pedagogical practices, it is important to assert the tendency of learners at *Good Hope School* to respond more favourably to more progressive teaching styles. However, it is acknowledged that several studies show that a significant number of students are more receptive to traditional methods of teaching (Kain, 2003).

This study showed that learners preferred a more relaxed environment in the classroom and found ways of opting out when faced with teaching that was not also engaging. The learners’ needs for entertainment reflected the societal norms of a consumerist society that endorsed constant entertainment as a basic value. Some teachers understood the learners’ need to be entertained and made use of puzzles, drawing, dramatization and construction in their teaching. However, such methods were typically used as ways of keeping learners occupied and seldom as alternative methods of making learners engage with concepts more fully or as alternatives to traditional approaches. Like the studies Kain (2003) alludes to, the learners had a tendency to want easy answers and to avoid difficult work.

It is the finding of this thesis that one of the reasons teachers follow more formalistic teacher-centred elements in their teaching is in order to maintain control over large numbers of learners with few resources at hand to keep them interested and entertained. Guthrie (1980) recognises that one of the key elements identified by Beep (1962) was the identification of the teacher as

the key agent of change in the classroom. Further study into teacher pedagogical practices and the notion of the teacher as change agent in the classroom space is recommended.

7.3.3 Precariousness

Children who attended *Good Hope School* lived precarious lives; some were part of migrant families eking out a living in the city ghettos whilst others hailed from the disadvantaged townships of Durban. Their family structures were in keeping with what has been defined as being part of the precariat⁴⁶ (Standing, 2011). This study suggests that both education and socio-economic conditions in this country are fundamentally unequal, perpetuating the imbalances of the past in substance if not wholly in form.

Although many of the children expressed hope for an affluent future, the evidence in this study shows that it is more than likely that the disadvantaged children of the school will continue to be trapped in a cycle of poverty. This stems from their present low social base and the unlikelihood of their poverty being adequately addressed in the foreseeable future. Their hopes of the education they receive making a difference in their lives may be dashed, owing to the enormous hardships of living in a hopeless, precarious and squalid environment surrounded by drugs, prostitution and poverty.

Fataar (2009b) calls township schools “social reproduction incubators that entrap young people in place” and decided that township children do not have “the urban imagination and requisite literacies to access the city’s educational, occupational and leisure spaces, having developed limited repertoires in the place of the township and its schools” (p. 10). This study looks at learners in urban city spaces who mirror the limited repertoires of their township counterparts. The common ingredient in the two spaces relates to poverty and an apartheid discourse that imposed notions of exclusion and marginalisation from the rich cultural repertoire of recognised knowledge in the more privileged sectors of society. Learners are entrapped in aspirational

⁴⁶ “Below the proletariat is the rapidly growing ‘precariat’, a class-in-the-making... The first variety consists of those drifting from working-class backgrounds into precariousness, the second consists of those emerging from a schooling system over-credentialised for the flexi-job life on offer, and the third are migrants and others, such as the criminalised, in a status denying them the full rights of citizens” (Standing, 2012).

discourses that will be curtailed by the realities of their poverty-stricken lives. As Fataar (2009b) states, they lack “the discursive material to navigate their way into better social lives” (p. 10).

This thesis suggests that a radical social transformation is necessary nationally as an essential concomitant of education initiatives before learners can begin to exercise their true and full potential in the educational environment. Until then, learners from marginalised communities will continue to be disadvantaged, even with more resources allocated to schools.

7.4 Concluding Comments

The experiences of learners outlined in this chapter are what teachers encounter in their classrooms every day. Children enter school with different linguistic, social and cultural capital that have become requirements for school success. Through practices steeped in historical normalisation techniques, learners’ behaviours are pathologised and they experience a degraded education. The evidence in this thesis presents “complicated and sometimes contradictory images” (Leander et al., 2010, p. 385) of the learners who are bracketed into relationships that define who they are and limit the full potential of their becoming.

This thesis concurs with Fataar’s (2012) findings of learning suppression. The laminations metaphor explains the multiplicated contexts suppressed in the learning environment with the veneer providing the outward appearance of stasis and normality. Learners present different persona in the different settings of their lives and adapt and change as the need arises. Within the school space they present the persona most valued by the school. Learners who are unable to make such adaptations find themselves marginalised and pathologised in the school space.

The strongest messages are the unspoken ones. As the familiar is made unfamiliar the silences gain new meanings in the spaces of the school. Discourses that are silenced by new values of racial and gender equality continue to operate clandestinely through innuendo and tactics that shame individuals into compliance. New value systems that have emerged in the post-apartheid era raise tensions in teachers’ pedagogical practices.

The neoliberal capitalist order is responsible for the choices the state has made with regards to its programmes for educational change. Schools like *Good Hope School* struggle financially and are

dependent on donors and a teaching corps who value their pastoral roles highly. While such service is commendable it is also responsible for teachers having to sacrifice their academic role in the interest of learners' survival needs.

Reassembling the threads in the globalised world shows how values change over time. The longer those changes become entrenched the more difficult they are to modify. Learners' expectations at school have changed but teachers are slower in adapting to the needs and expectations of their learners. Teachers are understandably confused about the roles they should play in a changing world.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

My journey through this research project has been a stimulating experience in which I not only confronted my own personal understanding and beliefs but also discovered ways in which knowledge systems function within socio-economic systems. In this chapter I shall reflect critically on that journey and explain how the conclusions drawn from this thesis are important for creating a different understanding of learners at *Good Hope School*.

In the introduction to the thesis I set out the two research questions:

3. *What are learners' day-to-day experiences of school life at a school that regards itself as poor?*
4. *Why do those learners experience school life in the way they do?*

Through these questions I set out to conduct an investigation into the experiences of learners at a school in the Durban area which regards itself as poor. My study took me back into history as I investigated the background of the school which the learners attended and the society in which the learners lived.

I found that history continues to exist in the present in different ways. Rhythms of life continue to impact on the way education is conducted and the way learners are viewed. Through micro lenses I looked at the nitty-gritty of daily school life and found that it could not be divorced from the learners' social lives in an impoverished, marginalised community. Change is an integral part of human existence but within the changed are the threads of how it came to be. Latour (2010) asserts that meaning is mediated in "constantly re-realized, re-represented" (p. 123) ways. In this concluding chapter, I point out the importance of this thesis for knowledge creation and the larger education project by positing some ways of looking differently at the experiences of learners and suggesting ideas for further research.

8.2 Reflections on the Methodology

By using ethnography as the methodology for this study I was able to look at the minutiae of everyday life at *Good Hope School*. Ethnography was well suited to investigate and uncover the day-to-day experiences of the learners in the multiplicated contexts of their lives. My stay at the school was long enough to allow for the development of a feeling of trust and rapport with the learners. In the individual interviews, learners felt comfortable to divulge intimate details of their lives, thus assisting me to understand the many complexities of their lives within and outside the school premises. Whilst a large volume of data (observation notes, reflexive journal, photographs, interviews, questionnaires, school logs, archival evidence) was collected, only a selection could be used in this thesis. This suggests that further study, using the data, is possible.

By using actor network theory as a toolkit I was able to navigate across time and space in ways that aided new thinking about the relationship between time and space in the learning environment. As mentioned in Chapter Two, what positions the investigation as different is the understanding and use of the theory that space is neither fixed nor absolute. This created the possibility of an exploration of a learning space not constrained by geographical boundaries and preconceived notions. The actor network theory perspective has also given the study unique lenses to understand the importance of ensuring that the voices of participants are heard.

The multiperspectival theoretical/conceptual framework provided unique lenses to analyse complex terrains and positionings of the learners' lives and their engagement with their learning. The use of both critical and pragmatic theorists was held together because the thesis upheld the voices of the participants over the theory. The theory has therefore not dominated the study but rather served the important purpose of interpreting complex data containing a plurality of views and perceptions.

8.3 A Personal Reflection

My rich experience during my sojourn at *Good Hope School* can, without doubt, be attributed to the warm collegiality of the principal and staff at the school who granted me almost unfettered access to the school. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the many challenges facing this school a strong sense of community prevailed.

That *Good Hope School* is an agent of non-racial, multi-cultural transformation in education and in society was brought home to me on my last day at the school when the principal confided to me that she had been humbled by her experiences as principal of the school. She rejoiced that she had had the privilege to participate in and experience diverse religious and cultural celebrations and had learnt a great deal from staff and learners alike. She regretted that other principals, who had stubbornly protected their 'white' spaces, had lost out on a unique experience of what it really means to be South African.

The *Good Hope School* of the 21st century is a different institution from that of its first hundred years of history. Whilst other former 'Model C' schools continue to exist in much the same way as the past, celebrating their colonial and apartheid history and culture - albeit in a muted way, *Good Hope School* has embraced the multi-cultural, non-racial educational mandate regardless of the financial sacrifice it has made by opening its doors to the children of the working class and the poor. In its second century it has transformed from a school of the colonials and the racially privileged to one with a working class character typical of the many struggling South African schools. This thesis shows that despite this evidence of change at the school traditional practices have permeated, in complex ways, the order and structure of teaching and learning there.

An important moment in the development of this thesis was my exposure to the school's log books. This opened up an unexpected new avenue which brought me into direct contact with the past and revealed the linkages and contrasts between the past and the dramatic changes of the present. This is a school which has transformed in ways not many have understood or acknowledged. My exploration of the school archives prompted me to delve even further into the history of the area. Like Saab (2013) I felt tremendous energy radiating from the pages that reflected the struggles of ordinary people and brought vigour to an otherwise mundane research process.

The intention of this thesis has been to allow the experiences of the participants in the study to generate new ways of thinking. In this ethnographic study, observing participants in their own environment and listening to their views and responses, resulted in change to my own perspective and understanding of the world of the participants. I, a former teacher, sat in the

classroom -- an environment which has been very familiar to me for almost my entire life – for months as an observer, and learnt so much more than I had anticipated.

A striking aspect of all the learner participants in this study is the dignity with which they lived their lives in spite of the hardships they experienced. The importance of dignity to the human spirit is captured in the words of the poet Nicolas Guillen, who framed a poem around the dignity he gained through the Cuban revolution. They are the simple things in everyday life related to dignity, rather than the material gains he enjoyed after the revolution that Guillen celebrates in his poem *Tengo*⁴⁷ (Sitrin, 2013). Learners at *Good Hope School* expressed their yearning for the greater dignity to be gained through success in education.

My quest to think in a new way has made me wonder why new thinking has not filtered into the school system even though so many educators yearn for change and a better outcome for all learners. This thesis posits that the social context of learners' lives impact on their learning.

8.4 Summarising Thesis Findings

The major contribution of this thesis is its investigation into the experiences of learners at a school that has become disadvantaged through its open admission policies. It is reflective of an as yet under-researched area of schools of its type situated in a changing urban population of flat dwellers in the post 1994 period. *Good Hope School* is a unique example of a school that represents the new inner city landscape of South Africa's poor. The 40% migrant population is an added facet of the school. Previous studies by Fataar (2007a) into the changing urban environment in the areas around Cape Town investigated changing identities of learners on the move who live in the township but attend better functioning schools outside those areas. *Good Hope School* also attracts learners from the townships but the majority of its population is drawn from its immediate surroundings. It is that combination of poor urban flat dwellers of all races including migrants from around Africa along with learners on the move, as described by Fataar (2007a), that situates this thesis as distinctive.

⁴⁷ Translates from Spanish to 'I have'

The unique school logs, together with archival evidence, assisted in linking the past and the present into a network of continuities and discontinuities that are relevant for understanding the way the school operates in the present and the way the school understands its role and its relationship to its learners. The historical positioning of the school and the tracing of the life of the urban poor is important for understanding the way urban spaces have evolved. The present contradictions and complications between the urban flat dwellers and the local authorities have their genesis in the past. The school logs and archival evidence provide special insight into history and the chance to link the past and present into a flattened space, telescoping the distance of static time zones into an analysis of everyday realities in spaces no longer separated. History and tradition are laminated into the identity of the school.

As a time-space study, this thesis was uniquely positioned to view the everyday experiences of the learners and the multiplied contexts of their lives. Links with other studies (Fataar, 2012; Holland & Leander, 2004; Leander, 2002c, 2004; Leander et al., 2010) help to construct an understanding of how positioning in time and space are laminated into the identities of individual learners. This thesis introduces the idea of a veneer that is the outward visible persona presented in the normalised spaces in which learners navigate their learning. The veneer is sometimes fragile and can be breached by provocation, resulting in aggression or defensive positioning. Veneers that are able to withstand outward provocation are more able to protect the integrity of the laminations. Learners with strong veneers were more easily assimilated into the school's value system and recorded greater success with their learning. Fragile veneers resulted in greater conflict between the school and the learner. This finding can be compared to conclusions Fataar (2007b) drew when he argued that a learner developed "a thin connectedness to her living space and firmer attachments to becoming spatially mobile" (p. 29). Learners who had firmer attachments to the values promoted by the school had greater chances of being successful.

This thesis shows that insight into positioning is crucial to understanding how individuals see themselves as well as the way society imposes status and restrictions on individuals. Holland and Leander (2004) show how positionings are historically situated in space and are multiple and mobile. This thesis confirms that learners' schooling experiences are located in a historical milieu that is complex. Located in a classroom space, the multiplied contexts of learners' and

teachers' lives come together to produce a hybrid learning environment that favours the continuation of the past, confronts constant curriculum changes and is subjected to difficulties in the social setting. The laminations thicken as learners participate in an education discourse that positions them as lesser than. While some learners use street smarts to overcome the immobility of labelling, others who have poor self-images, become embroiled in the limitations imposed by teachers and school difficulties. Learners' experiences of themselves are both multi-dimensional and complex. Some of them adopt different persona for different occasions; for example, one to fit in at school and another to fit in with peer groups. The persona presented to their peers may be quite different from, or at variance with, what the teachers regard as normal and acceptable behaviour.

In his investigation into working class kids, Willis (1977) exposed an anti-mentalist attitude that defined the way the lads' futures unfolded. This thesis also found an attitude amongst some learners in the classroom that contributed to learning suppression. While I would not describe it as anti-mentalist, it challenges the notion that learners are passive recipients of information from teachers. Instead it shows that learners cooperate with learning that fits in with their own views of what is important. Learners present to the teachers what they think those teachers want. While engaging in other activities they simultaneously give the impression of doing what they are told. Secret messaging systems in the classroom undermine the authority of the teacher. Yet teachers remain largely uninvolved in the dual learning happening in their presence. The other learning is about relationships and interests that the learners value.

The international trend related to the reordering of values and notions of fairness as expounded by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, has resulted in the repositioning of what is considered important. New learned values challenge traditional ways of thinking and being. Learners learn to cope with the difficulties of surviving in a complex urban environment. The precise nature of the experience of learning as scrutinised in this study is difficult to pin down as the complexities reveal that what is perceived is often a façade, portrayed for easier acceptance within the constraints of what is considered conventional. The evidence presented of the way poor learners hide their poverty in the more privileged environment of the school indicates that poverty, like race and gender is an identity construct that requires deeper

understanding. The study suggests that this phenomenon may not be unique to the subjects of this study, and that children from disadvantaged and lower socio-economic communities elsewhere may share a similar plight, and therefore deserving of sensitive attention.

This thesis highlights the social tensions that have grown and impacted on the urban, ghettoised lives of the learners at the school. Narratives from the learners and teachers showed the increased urban blight evident not only in the living conditions of the learners but also the “social disorganisation and crime” (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013, p. 483) that were part of their everyday lives.

It is their poverty and urban social realities that characterise and conflict with learners’ identity constructs at school. Learners felt ashamed of their poverty and it therefore remained largely hidden in the normalised discourse of the school. It was in their social environments that learners displayed street-savvy survival skills that enabled them to traverse the dangerous urban spaces. While important learning was accrued in those spaces, it was the school learning that was recognised and needed for assimilation into the middle class life to which the learners aspired. Learners preferred to conceal the reality of their impoverished home environments from teachers and peers alike. Poverty was an important mediator of their learning and, though laminated into, and less apparent in their identities at school, it was what they experienced when they were at home.

The broken mirror imagery, alluded to in Chapter Seven, encapsulates the difficulties of poor learners struggling to cope with value systems that conflict with their daily experiences in an adverse urban space. The reflections which the learners confront in the mirror are at odds with what the school upholds and promotes. In the reality of the learners’ challenging lives, the school’s promise of a middle-class future appears to be a shattered illusory image.

It is in the urban spaces of their lives that inequality is experienced, reproduced and constantly reconfigured into learners’ identities. Multiple aspects related to disadvantage result in limited access to essential repertoires needed for school success. The mission of *Good Hope School* to teach learners within a regulative and ethical space was frustrated, on a daily basis, by the

complex realities of the learners' urban-poverty. The conflict that emerged produced a semi-functional learning space.

The thesis shows that learners who are unable to navigate effectively between their stark social conditions and the school environment become disengaged from their school learning. Their aspirations for a middle class life are compromised and they risk being relegated to menial, low paying jobs.

Through developing an understanding of the nature of the learner and the learning experiences, the thesis unravels the mediators in the learning environment that pathologises certain behaviours and thereby contributes to a 'new normal' discourse evident, for instance, in the disdain expressed by teachers about greater openness amongst learners with regard to sexual knowledge. By recognising the way behaviour is pathologised, the thesis contributes to a better understanding of learners in the educational space. Contradictory and complex value systems that operate side by side bring to the fore the changing understanding of reality that emerges through positioning and daily existence.

The multiperspectival approach outlined in Chapter Three has ensured that complex theories, applicable to understanding the multiplied contexts of learners' lives in their everyday contexts, could be used effectively for analysis in this thesis. Theorists as diverse as Lefebvre, Foucault and Boltanski were used to analyse the lives of the learners in order to understand them as they presented themselves, rather than as theory presents them. The Latourian suggestion for networking has been important for linking time and space effectively in complex settings.

The use of the SenseCam in this study to visually record observations was, to the best of my knowledge, unique in South Africa. Its use in an education setting was also very different from what it was originally designed for in research on patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The SenseCam provided photographs that were unexpected and caught learners in their actual settings without the constraints associated with videoing and normal photographs because it was largely unnoticed. However, despite the multitude of photographs and varied situations produced, only a few could be utilised when writing up the thesis. There remains the possibility

of its further utilisation in other studies. Here an important aspect, underutilised in this thesis, is the timing mechanism for quickening and slowing down viewing as well as timing in terms of length of recordings.

Despite the reputation of *Good Hope School* as a privileged school because of its historical legacy, this thesis indicates that when schools are not properly resourced and supported the standards at the school deteriorate. From my observations and informal discussions with staff members, as well as my personal experience working at another former 'Model C' school, I have shown that in comparison to such schools *Good Hope School* lagged behind in terms of its academic programme, sports programme, maintenance of infrastructure and overall general ability to be financially sustainable. *Good Hope School*, whilst underfunded and resourced in comparison to most other former 'Model C' schools, was nevertheless perceived as being better than some poorly functioning schools in the townships. In this thesis it is shown that learners enjoyed improved status through their attendance at this former 'white' only school. While they said they enjoyed attending school, their involvement with their learning was compromised in multiplied ways. Laminations were used to explain those multiplied contexts.

8.5 Implications of Findings

It is possible to use a multiperspectival approach to bring together different theories to work together. In this thesis it has been used to get a better understanding of the participants' learning experiences. Critical pragmatism has guided the researcher to constantly put forward the views and experiences of the learners who were central to the study. Meaning emerged from the realities in the lives of the learners, as observed by myself as the researcher and explained by the learners. An important lesson has been about ensuring that the voices of the participants are raised so that they dictate what the research unravels.

Learners from schools situated on the margins of functionality are less likely to overcome the many burdens imposed by compromised teaching and learning. Pedagogical practices do not change when instructions are given from authorities for them to change. They merely adapt to the new expectations. Rulings intended to promote equality unintentionally serve a dual purpose

that makes individuals outwardly conform but also forces practices underground, resulting in clandestine discourses that are more difficult to address.

Good Hope School has made brave choices in the post-apartheid era that positions it as a prime example of what could be described as a typical South African school in all its diversity and heterogeneity. The study gives insight into both the triumphs and tribulations that stem from its situation. Educational success is closely aligned to privilege. Schools like *Good Hope School* that operate in difficult environments cannot address the numerous problems they face on their own. They have aligned themselves with organisations and persons who assist them in ensuring their continued existence. The committed teaching corps keeps the school functioning and viable so that it is not considered at risk. Yet, evidence suggests that it operates in an insecure environment where safety is not guaranteed and teaching and learning is compromised. It survives largely because of its own efforts. Greater support from the state would assist it to address its education mandate more fully.

Its historical positioning identifies it as better than, but years of underfunding have had a toll on its optimal functioning. Yet, the school has a compassionate outlook and provides essential services to the impoverished community around the school. It prioritises a caring environment and teaches learners to see others as more important than themselves.

The dialectical link between the school and the social environment result in compromised conditions for learning and teaching. The burden on teachers as pastoral caregivers means that there is an added psychological drain on the teachers who already work under tremendous strains of overcrowded classrooms and heavy teaching loads.

It is understood that children from different backgrounds have different experiences of education. A consequence of the international trend in the marketisation of education means that those with the least social and economic capital are unlikely to benefit from social mobility. Those living in the most disadvantaged communities suffer great inequalities in the education arena. This study suggests that greater understanding of poverty can be gleaned from engaging directly with those who have these experiences. Experiences, from inside and outside the classroom, are equally important for a better understanding of the child learner. This implies that

there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities associated with the educational experiences of learners from poor backgrounds. This study shows that regional and or continental upheavals such as wars, political and economic problems have implications for local people. It is difficult to disentangle the global and local interrelationships that emerge as catastrophes create new spaces and places. Ways of being are constantly challenged or under increasing scrutiny. There are implications related to children's responses to the radical shifts and changes in environments and socio-economic positioning. By unbinding the learners from the walls of the classroom better understanding of the complexities of their lives are revealed.

8.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This study raised a number of questions that could be addressed through future studies. The study was focussed on the experiences of the learners. However, those experiences were strongly correlated to teaching practices and pedagogical values. This study has skirted the many difficulties educators face in the new educational spaces. Studies related to teacher experiences would fill the gaps left by this study.

The philosophical arguments raised in this study opens spaces for further research into what values are and how values should be prioritised in the educational arena.

This thesis suggests that educational change is closely related to social change. The influx of migrant communities into the landscape of Durban indicates far reaching changes that are as yet not fully understood. Further investigation into the lives of migrant learners and their families is important for understanding and addressing the complexities of urban school life. A deeper understanding of the tensions between precarious South African communities and equally precarious migrant communities is important. The tensions are present in classrooms serving both communities. This thesis did not explore that deeply enough to provide a clear explanation of the tensions.

8.7 Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in a Grade 6 classroom of a particular school. The findings of the study cannot be assumed to be replicated in similar schools or situations. While the findings in this study support other similar studies previously conducted, further research is needed to clarify some of broader claims of the study, particularly those related to teacher practices, pedagogy and the impact of socio-economic conditions on learning and teaching.

8.8 Concluding Comments

This ethnographic study explored what happened behind the imposing red face-brick walls of *Good Hope School*. It found that crucial to an understanding of the learner experiences is an understanding of learners' social lives in and out of the school. The walls of the school, as well as of the urban dwellings, were only a physical obstacle to the networked and layered lives of the human beings who traversed those spaces. A complex relationship between physical and social space mediated the educational experiences and positionings of the learners in this study. As the past merged with the present new ways of being developed.

Education aspirations for the poor are about creating a better life for themselves and their families. Unfortunately only a few who are given different chances to get out of the predictable trajectory of poverty make the break to which so many aspire. Without the requisite social and academic repertoire needed for educational success, few succeed.

In the introductory chapter I quoted an insightful inquiry from Chisholm (2004a) "...If apartheid was immanent in everything about the way education was shaped, practised and deployed, then how does the new society embed contemporary forms of education both as an outcome of, and factor in, the transition from apartheid?" This study explains how learners experience education and why they experience education the way they do. Chisholm's quest for greater clarity about how the past can be understood and overcome has been a difficulty this thesis has struggled with. The solution has to take cognisance of the realities of the lives of poor people. The solution is to be found in the stark inequalities that continue in the post-apartheid state. Education is bound to social realities. Changed social realities can lead to changed education outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Permission to conduct research from KZN Department of Basic Education

	kzn education Department: Education KWAZULU-NATAL
CARMEL TM CHETTY 1 LONSDALE DRIVE DURBAN NORTH 4051	Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar Date: 22 February 2011 Reference: 0016/2011

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS, EDUCATORS AND DEPARMENTAL OFFICIALS

The above matter refers.

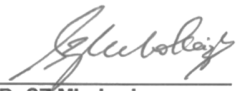
Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research:
An Ethnographic Exploration of the Day to Day Texture of the School Life of Poor Children

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes


Dr SZ Mbokazi
Acting Superintendent-General

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa
PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, PIETERMARITZBURG 3201
TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/8611; Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za / emiso.sibhakane@kzndoe.gov.za

Appendix 2: UKZN full approval notification



Appendix 3: Permission from SGB

Permission from the School's Governing Body for the use of the SenseCam

School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Private Bag x03
Ashwood, 3605
Date:.....

The Chairperson
School Governing Body
Durban

Dear Sir / Madam

I wish to conduct research at your school for my PhD thesis. Below is a short explanation of what the research entails as well as my personal details. This explanation is necessarily brief but should you require further information I am willing to meet with you.

As part of the research work for my Phd studies I am investigating the day-to-day experiences of school children in Grade Six. The title of my study is 'An ethnographic exploration of the day to day texture of the school life of poor children'.

I chose your school because many of the learners do not enjoy the privileges of learners at other schools that are far more advantaged in terms of the financial resources of the school and the parents. Through my research I would like to understand how learners in poorer communities experience education from day to day.

For this project the educator will wear a little camera called a SenseCam that will automatically take photographs of the learners in the classroom and on the playground. The SensCam can be switched off when the wearer so desires. With your permission I will use those photographs to better understand what is taking place in the classroom and playground amongst the learners.

The SenseCam is a wearable camera. It captures an average 3-4 photographs per minute. It will provide the researcher with unique data of what learners are doing in order to investigate their day to day experience of education.

Written permission will be sought from all learners, their parents or guardians and the educators selected to participate in the research project. Names and places will be changed to ensure that the school and participants remain anonymous. All those directly involved will be spoken to personally before they sign letters of consent.

Permission will be sought from those whose photographs are selected for the study. If permission is denied those photographs will not be used. Photographs of those for whom permission to use is given, will have their faces concealed to protect their identities in all publications.

I am a retired educator with over thirty-five years of experience in South Africa and Botswana at a variety of education institutions. I continue to work as a part-time lecturer in the School of Education of KwaZulu Natal while I pursue full time studies for my PhD.

There are no financial rewards to your institution for participating in this research project. The only benefit is through what this study can teach all of us about learners' experiences of school life.

I trust that my letter will be favourably received. Please contact me should you require further information. You can also contact my supervisors should you need to.

Signed _____

=====

CONSENT FORM FOR GOVERNING BODY

I(Write your full name) the(Write your designation on the governing body) hereby confirm that the above letter was discussed at the governing body meeting on (Write the date of the meeting) and it was agreed that the school be part of this research project and for the use of the SenseCam on the school premises for the duration of the project.

The photographs selected for the study may not be used for anything other than the stipulated purpose of the research project. The identity of the learners and the school will be concealed and remain anonymous.

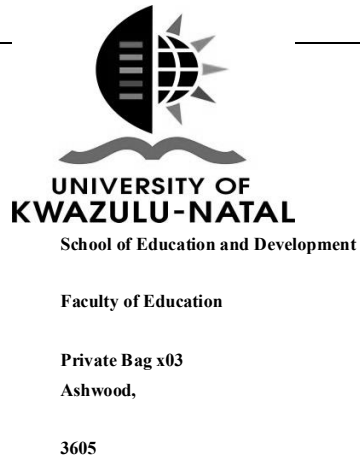
I do understand that the only way the school can benefit is through what this study can teach us about learners' experiences of school life.

I have been designated by the governing body to sign this agreement.

Name: Signature:

Designation: Date:

Appendix 4: Letter of consent



Participant information sheet and consent form

Dear _____

Description: As part of the research work for my Phd Degree I am investigating the day-to-day experiences of school children.

Prof A. Muthukrishna, senior lecturer in social justice education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is the person supervising the work.

To enable the research to be effective, we are requesting that you assist us by agreeing to participate in the study by being interviewed or participating in discussion groups.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

Privacy: All names and places will be changed to protect your identity in the research report. Confidentiality and privacy is guaranteed.

Time involvement: The expected length of the interview is approximately one hour. You will be notified prior to the interview.

Payments: You will receive no payment for your participation in this study.

Participant rights: You have the right to refuse to take part in this research. If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular

questions and your rights will be upheld at all times. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the project, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Prof. A. Muthukrishna at _____

I agree to participate in this study. I do understand that the only way I may benefit is through what this study can teach us about learners' experiences of school life.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

I _____, agree for my child _____ to participate in this study.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Permission to take photographs

I _____ (print full name) agree that my photograph can be taken and used for the purposes explained to me for the research being conducted at the school. I understand that the photograph will not be used for any other purpose without my written consent. My personal details will not be disclosed without my permission.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Questionnaire

1. My name is: 2. I am a girl / boy
(circle one)

3. I am:

South African	Zimbabwean	Congolese	Other:
---------------	------------	-----------	--------

4. I live in (circle one)

South Beach	North Beach	The City	Umlazi	Newlands	Kwa Mashu	Phoenix	Berea/Umbilo	Other: _____
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5. I live with; (Tick all the people who live with you. Write the number if more than one.)

mother	father	sister	brother	uncle	aunt	cousin	parents' friend	grandfather	grandmother	other
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6. I am years old.

7. My family is RICH / POOR / OK (circle one)

8. At home I mostly speak _____

9. The place where I feel safe is: _____

10. The place where I do not feel safe is: _____

11. The best place at my school is; _____

12. A place at my school that is not safe is: _____

13. The best teacher is _____

14. My favourite teacher is _____

15. My best friend is _____

16. A person in the class who irritates me is _____

17. A person in the class I like is _____

18. A person in the class I admire: _____

19. I [like school. / I do not like school.] (choose one)

20. I prefer [going to school / being on holiday] (choose one)

21. When I am not doing schoolwork, I [play / watch TV / read / draw / do chores / other:
_____]

22. My favourite TV show is: _____

23. Something I do at home that I cannot do at school: _____

24. Something I do at school that I cannot do at home: _____

25. Something I cannot show/tell my teacher: _____

26. Something interesting about me is:

Places around my school

- a) Where I feel safe _____
- b) Where I feel nervous. _____
- c) Where my language is spoken. _____
- d) Where I never go. _____
- e) Where we have fun. _____
- f) Where some children get bullied. _____
- g) Where fights happen. _____
- h) Where kids push and shove. _____
- i) Where there are secrets. _____
- j) Where naughty things happen. _____
- k) Where the cool kids hang out. _____
- l) Where we gather in our groups. _____
- m) Where I meet my friends. _____

Behaviour

- n) Good behaviour _____
- o) Busy _____
- p) Bossy _____
- q) Not paying attention _____
- r) Helpful _____
- s) Naughty _____
- t) Frustrated _____
- u) Having fun _____
- v) Funny _____
- w) Bullying _____
- x) Silly _____
- y) Lonely _____
- z) Messing around _____
- aa) _____

MOMENTS: The picture gives me a

GOOD FEELING	BAD FEELING

Appendix 7: Learner responses to questionnaire

Good Hope School Questionnaire						
2. I am a girl / boy (circle one)	girl 15	boy 18				
3. I am:	South African 25	Zimbabwean 1	Congolese 7	Other: 0		
4. I live in (circle one)	South Beach 15	North Beach 2	The City 3	Umlazi 1	Newlands 1	Kwa Mashu 3
	Phoenix 0	Berea/Umhlobo 3	Other 5			
5. I live with; (Tick all the people who live with you. Write the number if more than one.)	mother 29	father 16	sister 28	brother 29	uncle 11	aunt 13
	cousin 13	parents' friend 5	grand - father 2	grand - mother 5	other 1	
6. I am years old.	11 8	12 17	13 7			
7. My family is RICH / POOR / OK (circle one)	rich 2	poor 6	ok 25			
8. At home I mostly speak:	English 11	Zulu 18	Congolese 0	other 17		
9. The place where I feel safe is:	home 27	school 9	other 8			
10. The place where I do not feel safe is:	home 1	street 26	field 0	with strangers 1	sea/ beach 7	school 1
11. The best place at my school is:	classroom 15	field 15	courts 0	library 1		
12. A place at my school that is not safe is:	field 7	toilet 13	car park 2	netball court 3	other classes 1	outside 2
	behind school 1					
13. The best teacher is:	Hendricks 24	other 14				
14. My favourite teacher is:	Hendricks 18	Govind 5	Other 19			
15. My best friend is:	male 35	female 22				
16. A person in the class who irritates me is:	male 34	female 19				
17. A person in the class I like is:	male 12	female 23				
18. A person in the class I admire:	male 10	female 36				
19. I [like school. / I do not like school.] (choose one)	like 30	don't like 0				
20. I prefer [going to school / being on holiday] (choose one)	go to school 26	holiday 6				
21. When I am not doing schoolwork, I:	play 12	watch TV 16	read 19	draw 11	do chores 9	other 2
22. My favourite TV show is:	DBZ 11	soapie 0	children's programme 19			
23. Something I do at home that I cannot do at school:	watch TV 8	cellphone 4	talk 2	dance 2	play 4	wear civies 1
	scream 2	bath/toilet 3	sing 1	kiss girlfriend 1	sleep 2	chores 2
	listen 0	play on field 4	run around 1	date 1	get angry 1	keep quiet 2
24. Something I do at school that I cannot do at home:	kiss girlfriend 1	walk around 1	work 1	fight 1	be with teacher 5	act wild 2
	wear uniform 3	draw 1	play rugby/soccer 2			
25. Something I cannot show/tell my teacher:	private stuff 6	secrets 5	ugly word/ attitude 2	modelling 1	bad experiences 0	act wild 1
	about love 1	her unfairness 2	bad things 2			
26. Something interesting about me is:	sing/dance 2	looks 3	wealth 1	food preference 1	likes/dislikes 2	relationships 9
	abilities 6	goals 3				

Appendix 8: Combined class responses to photographs

	places														tot	haviour																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																							
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Appendix 9: Annual National Assessment Averages (*Good Hope School*) 2011

GRADE	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS
Grade 1 written in Grade 2 (February)	86%	70%
Grade 2 written in Grade 3 (February)	45%	60%
Grade 3 written in Grade 4 (February)	60%	43%
Grade 4 written in Grade 5 (February)	43%	45%
Grade 5 written in Grade 6 (February)	60%	44%
Grade 6 written in Grade 7 (February)	56%	31%

Appendix 10: Annual National Assessment Averages (*Good Hope School*) 2012

GRADE	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS
GRADE 1 TOTAL	61%	70%
GRADE 2 TOTAL	62%	66%
GRADE 3 TOTAL	47%	35%
GRADE 4 TOTAL	53%	42%
GRADE 5 TOTAL	60%	33%
GRADE 6 TOTAL	51%	22%

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Appendix 12: Letter from copy-editor

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Attn: Prof A Muthukrishna , UKZN
Prof W. Hugo, UKZN

1 December 2013

Dear Prof Muthukrishna and Prof W. Hugo

This confirms that I have completed the editing of Carmel Chetty's PhD thesis, *An Ethnographic Exploration of the Day to Day Texture of the School life of Poor Children*.

Best regards
Barbara Louton
Editor
bellway@gmail.com

073 766 1139